ARUN SHOURIE

शारदा पुस्तकालय
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क्रमांक.... 225

# Missionaries in India

CONTINUITIES, CHANGES, DILEMMAS

# MISSIONARIES IN INDIA

*By the same author*

The World of Fatwas

A Secular Agenda

Indian Controversies:
*Essays on Religion in Politics*

# MISSIONARIES IN INDIA

## Continuities, Changes, Dilemmas

ARUN SHOURIE

HarperCollins *Publishers* India

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*For*
Malti Shukla
*for her giving, her fortitude, her example,*
*for having kept us afloat*

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# The Occasion

The Catholic Bishops Conference of India is the highest body engaged in attempts to coordinate the work of different Catholic churches in India and to engage in dialogue with other religions. "Its purpose," the *Catholic Directory Of India* states, "is to facilitate common action of the Hierarchy in matters that affect or are liable to affect the common interests of the Catholic Church in India. Through it the Bishops of India, conscious of their unity and solidarity in the episcopate, 'jointly exercise their pastoral office by way of promoting that greater good which the Church offers mankind, specially through forms and programmes of the Apostolate which are fittingly adapted to the circumstances of the age'." To celebrate the 50th anniversary of its establishment the C.B.C.I. convened a meeting in January 1994 to review the work of the Church in India. The meeting was held at the Ishvani Kendra, a Seminary in Pune. And it was an important gathering: it was only the second time in fifty years and the first time in twenty five years that such a comprehensive review was being undertaken; and Bishops, other senior clergy and Christian scholars from all over India participated in it. The substantive sessions lasted four full days.

For some reason the organizers were so kind as to ask me to give the Hindu perception of the work of Christian missionaries in India. That lecture and the discussion which followed forms the scaffolding of this book. I have supple-

mented the lecture with the textual material on which the points I urged were based. Where twenty examples could be given, I have given only two. At three places however I have reproduced the texts at some length: these are extracts from Sir Charles Trevelyan's *On the Education of the People of India*, and a speech each by him and Sir Richard Temple. The point is brought out better by the texts themselves than by any commentary that I could set out, and the texts are such an education, and in one case so electrifying a thing to read that it is best to read them in full. What Swami Vivekananda and Gandhiji said and wrote on the matter fills one with admiration, in fact with veneration — their passion for our country, their insight into what was being done, their prescience about what the consequences of that undoing would be, every line sparkles with these, and leaves one spell-bound. The reader will therefore find recurring references to their writings, speeches and conversations.

I hope the reader will not just read through the examples but will also ask why it is that such material is not placed before our students. After all, it is not difficult to come by, and, as the reader will agree upon going through it, it has the most direct bearing on our de-nationalization. Yet, even though he may have considerable interest in our current problems, even though he may have been following closely the public discourse on such problems, in all probability the reader would not have come across the material. Why is this so?

In large part no doubt because of the thoroughness with which the colonial design came to be carried out. Macaulay's design to create "a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." Sir Charles' reading, his prognosis, written in 1838: "Familiarly acquainted with us by means of our literature, the

Indian youth almost cease to regard us as foreigners. They speak of our great men as we do. Educated in the same way, interested in the same objects, engaged in the same pursuits with ourselves, they become more English than Hindus.... The young men, brought up at our seminaries, turn with contempt from the barbarous despotisms under which their ancestors groaned, to the prospect of improving their national institutions on the English model. Instead of regarding us with dislike, they court our society, and look upon us as their natural protectors and benefactors; the summit of their ambition is, to resemble us...."

But there is an even more potent cause for the near-total erasure of such material from our public discourse and our instruction. And that is the form of "secularism" which we have practised these forty-fifty years: a "secularism" in which double-standards have been the norm, one in which every thing that may remove the dross by which our national identity has been covered has become anathema.

Had I urged the themes of this lecture to our "secularists", they would have denounced them as "communal", "chauvinist-fascist", and, having labelled them, they would have exempted themselves from considering what was being said. The reaction of the Bishops, senior clergy and scholars gathered at Pune was the exact opposite. They listened with unwavering attention. They told me clearly that they did not agree with much of what I had said. They spelled out their reasons. But then they listened with the same attention to what I had to say in return.

"It has been a feast," said Professor Ramachandaran, who had been presiding, as he wound up the session.

To write up the lecture I needed the names and designations of the gentlemen who had asked the questions. Father Augustine Kanjamala, the Secretary of the C.B.C.I., sent them

promptly, and added thanks, in the warmest words: "....Your talk was scholarly as well as challenging. The fact that the audience wanted to continue the discussion after you had spent nearly two hours with them shows the keen interest the audience had in the subject and your critique of the Christian mission. May I request you to give the presentation in writing. I intend to publish the talks of various speakers of this Consultation....."

Three weeks later, having sent the text, I was back with another request: could the Secretary help me locate Indianised depictions of Jesus and of the Holy Family for the cover of this book? He was the soul of helpfulness again.

Just a while later I was told that they would publish what I had sent them, and in addition responses to it that some of those present were now going to write.

An example for us all.....

— *March, 1994*

# Premises and Consequences

# 1

# The results in general

While the organisers had invited me to give the Hindu assessment of missionary work in India, I am, of course, no body to speak on behalf of the Hindus. I am not even one who can report what the perception of the Hindus is of the work of Christian missionaries. My perspective is that of a person with the following background.

Since the trauma of the brain injury of our child — that is, for eighteen years — I have been reading and reflecting on the scriptures of all traditions to glean the explanation for suffering. The net result is this: I am not able to, or if you will I fail to reconcile the notion of God — as the one who knows everything, who is all powerful and is compassionate — with the persistence of suffering and evil. Either God does not know what is happening here, or is not able to alter it, or is not suffused with compassion. The customary explanations — that everything is His *lila*; that suffering results from what *we* do in exercise of the free will He has gifted us, from our *karma*; that He puts us to these travails so that we may be perfected in our devotion to Him, etc. — none of these hold. Consigning a child to suffer, is this *lila*, can it be anyone's *sport*? Surely, that does not square with His being compassionate; quite the contrary: He would be a sadist who found sport in inflicting suffering on a child. That suffering results

from *our* karma etc.? The asymmetry in the scriptures itself shows up the premise: in the Quran, for instance, all the good a person does is because of Allah, all the evil is due to himself. Moreover, as not a leaf moves without His willing it, why does He predispose poor man to do the first wrong thing which then sets him on the course to eventual suffering? "To instruct him all the better", is the standard answer. Surely, it would not have been beyond the capacity of the One who is All Powerful to devise more direct methods of instruction; those more direct methods which did not rely on suffering as an instructional device would have accorded better too with His being All Compassion.

"But He puts suffering and set-backs in your way to test your faith in Him," that is the recurring refrain in Quranic lore as it is in the teaching of the Church. But what sort of a Being is That which, having created this infinite universe, is so preoccupied with whether this puny little man in this speck of an earth in this one of a myriad galaxies is devoted to Him or not?

We could continue into the deeper questions. But even these initial ones remain unanswered. And so, I am not able yet to reconcile the picture of God which has been painted for us with the persistence of evil and suffering. But I am an ardent idolator: I bow to pictures and idols, I visit temples and Buddhist shrines and Sufi *dargahs* — specially Hindu temples.

As for daily practice, I meditate. To do so I follow techniques which have been set out in Buddhist texts.

Next, I believe that the essence of the Indian people is their inner quest, that this quest is and the means by which it is pursued are Hindu first and foremost. This is what Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Gandhiji have taught, and they, and of course Ramakrishna Paramhamsa, Ramana Maharishi,

the Paramacharya have exemplified by their lives.

Finally, a point that will become evident when we come to missionary work in areas like the North-East and among groups like the "Dalits": I believe that the interests of India as a whole must take precedence — overriding precedence — over the supposed interests of any part or group, religious, linguistic or secular. I also believe that, given the fragile condition of the structure of governance at the moment, the movements which are currently afoot ostensibly to "liberate" and "empower" these groups may well break India, that they will eventually bring upon even those groups the consequences that Bhindranwale's terrorism — much lauded by the "Dalit" leadership, which in turn has been much lauded by the Church — brought upon the Sikhs. And that therefore when these movements and those who foment them transgress the law they ought to be dealt with using the full might of the State.

As for the sources of information of a person like me about the work of Christian missionaries, three facts will suffice to give a glimpse. My wife studied at the Loreto Convent at Lucknow, as did her mother and sisters; my sister studied at the Convent of Jesus and Mary at Delhi; my brother and I studied at the St. Stephen's College at Delhi. Second, as I know neither Sanskrit nor Pali, even for reading Hindu and Buddhist scriptures I have to rely on English translations — a number of which have been done by Christian missionaries.

The third source of information is by far the most important. As one who for twenty years has been reading literature about the struggle to free India, I have naturally read the works of the great figures like Swami Vivekananda and Gandhiji. Swami Vivekananda has given the most heart-rending accounts of the calumnies that Christian missionaries

spread about Hinduism, about India, about him personally. Gandhiji's *Collected Works* contain even more detailed accounts of his conversations and correspondence with Christian missionaries: about their "designs" on him as he used to say teasing them, about what he thought of the claims and doctrines of the Church, about his assessment of the effect on India of their work. These mahatmas were persons of the highest integrity. The accounts were written and published at the very time — within days and weeks — of the events. The events they described, the conversations they set out were from their personal experience. Moreover, as the work of Christian missionaries was a very important element then, persons like Swami Vivekananda and Gandhiji had studied it minutely.

There are of course other accounts — I still remember how much impact the portions on missionaries in Sardar Panikkar's *Asia and Western Dominance* made on me. But I shall not take up in any detail these analyses and more recent material — about the North-East for instance — in this account.

*The result*

What impression then does a person of this background, conditioned or informed by these sources, reach about missionary work in India?

First, as Gandhiji used to say, the work of missionaries quickened the efforts of Hindu reformers to set our own house in order. The missionaries' zeal to convert Hindus and the realization that they were specially targeting the sections which had been trodden down, lent an urgency to the determination of reformers to work for the uplift and integration of these sections into the rest of Hindu society. Even the

denunciations of Hinduism and India by the missionaries served a purpose. As Swami Vivekananda and Gandhiji showed repeatedly, the denunciations were based on gross exaggeration, often on wholesale distortion, on complete fabrication. Ever so often, as both of them pointed out, they were put out for the crassest purpose: the lurid accounts were used in the U.S. and U.K. to raise money for financing the activities of the missionaries — "This is the hell Indians live in because of Hinduism, see how great and urgent is the need to save these souls," that was the refrain. Yet the denunciations served a purpose. The reformers were hastened in their work; the people were made more quickly aware of the defects in our society than they might otherwise have been.

The example of the missionaries had directly positive results too. Vinoba Bhave, for instance, remarked that missionaries set the example in leprosy work which was then taken up by others in India. To take an instance from a completely different field — the diligence with which they studied the scriptures of other religions works as an example to this day.

There are also the direct effects of their work in establishing a number of educational institutions, a number of hospitals. Generations of young men and women have received modern education, many of them have been endowed with ideals of service and uprightness and rectitude because of educational institutions run by missionaries. Similarly, lakhs have been saved and restored to health by hospitals set up by Church-affiliated organisations: the Christian Medical College at Vellore has long been a norm for our country. Even more important than the direct service which these institutions have rendered is that through decades and decades, in the face of widespread breakdown, they have maintained high

standards: in this they are a lesson and an example for our country.

But to all this there was another side: that is why Gandhiji always emphasised the word "indirect" whenever he talked of the good effects which missionary work had had for India.[1] Where they educated us to our shortcomings, they completely destroyed not only self-confidence but all self-respect: and that exactly as had been presaged by Swami Vivekananda — "The child is taken to school," he wrote, "and the first thing he learns is that his father is a fool, the second thing that his grandfather is a lunatic, the third thing that all his teachers are hypocrites, the fourth that all the sacred books are lies. By the time he is sixteen he is a mass of negation, lifeless and boneless..." Where they introduced us to a smattering of western learning, they led us to completely forget and — with no knowledge of it at all — feel ashamed of our tradition. Where they introduced modern

[1] Here is a representative assessment. A retired Indian police officer had written critically about the non-cooperation movement — that it was destructive etc. — and pointed by contrast to the work of Christian missionaries among untouchables. The police officer "has succeeded in airing his general ignorance of things Indian," Gandhiji noted in *Young India*. He pointed to the various constructive things the movement was doing, and then came to the point about the work of missionaries. He wrote, "The writer brings up for commendation the Christian work among untouchables; I must not enter into the merits of Christian work in India. The indirect influence of Christianity has been to quicken Hinduism into life. The cultured Hindu society has admitted its grievous sin against the untouchables. But the effect of Christianity upon India in general must be judged by the life lived in our midst by the average Christian and its effect upon us. I am sorry to have to record my opinion that it has been disastrous. It pains me to have to say that the Christian missionaries as a body, with honourable exceptions, have actively supported a system which has impoverished, enervated and demoralised a people considered to be among the gentlest and the most civilized on earth." (*Collected Works*, Volume 24, pp. 475-6.) The reader will find a comprehensive account of Hindu reactions and assessments of missionary work in Sita Ram Goel, *History of Hindu-Christian Encounters*, Voice of India, New Delhi, 1989.

schools, they, alongwith the secular British rulers, completely erased the vast network of instruction which, as Gandhiji used to remind his readers and as Dharampal has since so conclusively documented, was in place all across the country. Where they established modern hospitals, the system and outlook of which they were a part made us completely oblivious of the vast medical knowledge that had been accumulated over the centuries here: a knowledge the richness of which we are being reminded today as the West rushes to patent those very herbs and cures!

But there was an even deeper problem with these services, and Gandhiji drew attention to it again and again. The services were incidental. They were the means. The objective was to convert the natives to Christianity. The *Collected Works* contain several accounts as do Mahadev Desai's *Diaries* in which missionaries acknowledge to Gandhiji that the institutions and services are indeed incidental, that the aim is to gather a fuller harvest of converts for the Church.

To gain access to non-Christian households, counsels the *Catholic Dharma Ka Pracharak*, the preacher should know something of medicine. He will then be sought after whenever there is some illness in the house. Once there, he should try to prevail upon the parents that he should be allowed to baptize the child as the baptism would aid the child's recovery. If they do not agree, says the guide,

> If it is clear to you that the father is not going to agree to the child being baptised, and, as far as you can see, the child is close to death, then, on the pretext of administering some medicine, sprinkle water on his head in some secret way and pronounce the words of baptism. O, preacher, should the child die, you would have opened the gates of heaven for this child. Is this not a good deed? Now, if every preacher were to devote

himself to this work, then how many children would they send to heaven in a year?

And there follows the same advice in case an adult is dying:

> If the relatives of a dying man do not let you sit in the house, then explain to them that knowing you is no bad thing. The All-powerful God can cure the man. If this device does not work, then, using the excuse of administering medicine, seek leave to go near him. In short, use all devices to save his soul.[2]

We can see what this incongruence would spell even in the noblest example. Mother Teresa is the symbol of service and compassion for all Indians today. Her compassion and care encompass all: not for a moment does she wait to learn the religion or race or caste of the one in need. Her humility, her nobility, her service are of a saintly order. And there is no doubt that in her case it is her faith in Jesus which has called forth service of such an order. Yet even to such saintly effort, what would the orthodox doctrine of the Church impart? An anxiety to save souls, and the premise that a person in that destitute and desperate a condition, in that agony, a person that close to death would be better off, that he would be "saved" if he were to mumble a few words before breathing his last connoting a faith in Jesus.

On both counts the anxiety is beyond our grasp. That the ultimate object — I am thinking not of Mother Teresa now but of the missionaries who acknowledged this to Gandhiji — is to convert the man robs from the nobility of the service.

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[2] Quoted in *Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee, Madhya Pradesh*, Government Printing Press, Nagpur, 1956, Volume II, Part B, p. 54.

On the other side, the premise too is incomprehensible — that a man so desperate, in such agony, so close to death, so unable to reason and think and weigh would be "saved" if he utters a few words, declare though they may faith in Allah or in Rama and Krishna or in Jesus, that premise just does not stand to reason. The mind ripens bit by bit through effort sustained over long years — save in the sort of overwhelming, convulsing experience that the mystics report. But that latter kind of experience is certainly not what is expected or sought in the case of the desperate, dying man. What is sought is just a repetition of some words. That is evident. And yet securing that repetition seems to be so important an object in the eyes of the Church.

The premise thus seems no better than belief in any superstition.

And yet that premise is not incidental, it is central. Nor is it accidental, it is the keystone of the Christianity of the Church.

It is to that premise therefore that we must turn.

# 2

## Premises and their inevitable consequences

On 2 January 1937 a Professor of Philosophy from Poland, Krzenski, came to see Gandhiji. Krzenski told Gandhiji that Catholicism was the only true religion.

"Do you therefore say that other religions are untrue?," Gandhiji asked.

*Krzenski*: If others are convinced that their religions are true they are saved.

*Gandhiji*: Therefore you will say that everyone would be saved even through untruth. For you say that if a man really and sincerely believes in what is as a matter of fact untruth, he is saved. Would you not also hold, therefore, that your own way may be untrue but that you are convinced that it is true and therefore you will be saved?

*Krzenski*: But I have studied all religions and have found that mine is the only true religion.

*Gandhiji*: But so have others studied other religions. What about them? Well, I go further and tell you that religion is one and it has several branches which are all equal.

*Krzenski*: I accept that no religion lacks divine inspiration but all have not the same truth, because all have not the same light.

*Gandhiji*: It is an essentially untrue position to take, for

a seeker after truth, that he alone is in absolute possession of truth. What is happening to the poor astronomers today? They are changing their position every day, and there are scientists who impeach even Einstein's latest theory.

*Krzenski*: No. But I have examined the arguments in favour of other religions.

*Gandhiji*: But it is an intellectual examination. You require different scales to weigh spiritual truth. Either we are all untrue — quite a logical position to take — but, since truth does not come out of untruth, it is better to say that we all have truth but not the complete truth. For God reveals His truth to instruments that are imperfect. Raindrops of purest distilled water become diluted or polluted as soon as they come in contact with mother earth. My submission is that your position is arrogant. But I suggest to you a better position. Accept all religions as equal, for all have the same root and the same laws of growth.

*Krzenski*: It is necessary to examine every religion philosophically and find out which is more harmonious, more perfect.

*Gandhiji*: That presupposes that all religions are in watertight compartments. That is wrong. They are always growing. Let us not limit God's function. He may reveal Himself in a thousand ways and a thousand times.

Now the professor switched on to the next question, viz., that of fighting materialism.

*Gandhiji*: It is no use trying to fight these forces without giving up the idea of conversion, which I assure you is the deadliest poison that ever sapped the fountain of truth.

*Krzenski*: But I have a great respect for your religion.

*Gandhiji*: Not enough. I had that feeling myself one day, but I found that it was not enough. Unless I accept the po-

sition that all religions are equal, and I have as much regard for other religions as I have for my own, I would not be able to live in the boiling war around me. Any make-believe combination of spiritual forces is doomed to failure if this fundamental position is not accepted. I read and get all my inspiration from the Gita. But I also read the Bible and the Koran to enrich my own religion. I incorporate all that is good in other religions.

*Krzenski*: That is your goodwill.

*Gandhiji*: That is not enough.

*Krzenski*: But I have great respect for you.

*Gandhiji*: Not enough. If I were to join the Catholic Church you would have greater respect for me.

*Krzenski*: Oh yes, if you became a Catholic you would be as great as St. Francis.

*Gandhiji*: But not otherwise? A Hindu cannot be a St. Francis? Poor Hindu!

*Krzenski*: But may I take your photograph?

*Gandhiji*: No, surely you don't care for materialism! And it is all materialism, isn't it?[1]

Gandhiji's acuity and wit! On the other side the trap the dogma of certainties lays for its adherents.

For the position that Krzenski was articulating is the standard position, it is the ineluctable position that every adherent of a revelatory, millennialist religion must take. The premises of such religions — of Christianity, of Islam, of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism — are that there is one Truth; that it has been revealed to One Man — the Son of God Jesus, the Messenger of God Mohammed, the Culmination of Philosophers Marx; that it has been enshrined by him or on his

[1] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Volume 64, pp.202-4.

behalf in One Book — the Bible, the Quran, Das Kapital; that this text is very difficult to grasp and therefore one must submit to and be guided by One (external, overarching) Agency — the Church, the Maulvi, the Party. Now, as the Millennium shall come only when, but immediately when all accept the Revelation, it is the duty of the Agency — of the Church, of the Islamic rulers and Maulvis, of the Party — to see that everyone sees The Light. If, even after The Light has been shown to a person he refuses to subscribe to it, he must be put out of harm's way. For in that circumstance the man is not merely harming himself, he is coming in the way of the Mandate of God, of Allah's Will, or, as in Marxism, of History.

The presumptions Gandhiji was nailing in that representative conversation follow necessarily from these premises: there is no salvation outside the Church or the Faith or the Party — the poor Buddha, with all his compassion, just *cannot* be a St. Francis. What must be done also follows inevitably from those premises: the Church must convert, Lenin and Mao must export the Revolution, Khomeini must export the Revelation. These are inescapable responsibilities.

*The results*

Conversions have therefore been going on for 2000 years. They have been proclaimed to be an essential element of Christianity, a duty of every Christian. They have become one of the principal preoccupations — in some cases, as with the evangelists, the principal business — of the Church.

An incredibly vast organisation has been built up, and incredibly huge resources are expended to save souls. It costs "145 billion dollars to operate global Christianity," records a book on evangelization. The Church commands four *million* full-time Christian workers, it runs 13000 major

libraries, it publishes 22000 periodicals, it publishes four *billion* tracts a year, it operates 1800 Christian radio and TV stations. It runs 1500 universities, and 930 research centres. It has a quarter of a *million* foreign missionaries; and over four hundred institutions to train them. And those are figures from a book published in 1989 — since then there has been the surge in Eastern Europe and Russia.

And the numbers are indeed impressive. Europe and North America are almost wholly Christian. Ninety-seven percent of the population of Latin America, ninety-two percent of Philippines, thirty-six percent of Africa, thirty-two percent of South Korea is Christian.

Are they — either the continents or the converts — closer to the spiritual? Is their conduct better? Such were the questions that Gandhiji asked the missionaries about the ones they had converted in India. The questions are as telling in regard to converts the world over.

The preoccupation has recoiled on the Church itself. The life of Jesus was first replaced by the Church. The Church has since been swamped by what one participant during the recess after the Pune meeting called "the numbers game". Notice the language of the *Mission Handbook, North American Ministries Overseas*, published in 1986: "Today," it says, "the most fruitful ministries are carried by more than 100,000 pastors, evangelists and preachers. Full-time Indian missionaries from organised societies increased from 420 in 1973 to 2,941 societies in 1983. These missionaries have seen remarkable growth in northern India, in places such as Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Sikkim. In Western India, Christian workers estimate that two new worship groups are formed every week through indigenous missionary effort. The Indian Evangelist Team has set a goal of 2,000 new churches by the year

2000. In Tamil Nadu, the India Church Growth Mission hopes to plant 1,000 churches in unreached villages." Sounds more like the Planning Commission, if not the Pentagon, than like Jesus.

Similarly, the very first thing that the report of the Secretary of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India — the report is reproduced as Annexure I — focuses on is not the depth of the spiritual search, it is not the way the Christian doctrine is being affected by new developments in science or even Biblical studies, it is "Trends in Numerical Conversions."

"All over India numerical conversion was on regular increase for nearly 100 years until (the) 1961-71 period," the report begins. "Conversion and baptism are on the decline during the 1971-91 period... The only major exception is the North East area where the traditional trend is continuing, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh... Dalit conversions are also on the decline, after the period of mass conversion. A large number of Dalit Catholics have left the Church for various reasons, including socio-economic benefits from the government..."

In chasing numbers the missionaries, to use Gandhiji's words, became just "vendors of goods". And they came to adopt the usual techniques of vendors: the exaggerations common in advertising wares, targeting the sections that would be most susceptible, targeting them at times when they would be most vulnerable, or receptive if you will, using not just dialogue but allurement and violence.

There are volumes upon volumes that document the way the Church has spread by violence — in North and South America, in Asia. The sudden jumps in the number of adherents during famines and other privations testify to the use to which such times were put. Swami Vivekananda admonished the missionaries in the harshest language for the means they were using, for the use to which they were putting the

people's despair: his *Complete Works* are full of his extreme fury on these counts. Ram Swarup cites *India and Its Missions*, an official Catholic publication issued in 1923. It discusses the "*Spiritual Advantages of Famine and Cholera*" under, as he points out, the very heading! It quotes the report of the Archdiocese of Pondicherry to his superiors in Europe: "The famine has wrought miracles. The catechumenates are filling, baptismal water flows in streams, and starving little tots fly in masses to heaven." "A hospital is a ready-made congregation," the publication says. "There is no need to go into the highways and hedges and compel them 'to come in'. They send each other." Gandhiji noticed these tendencies and warned the missionaries often about the consequences — about how, pursuing numbers, they were debasing the great example of Jesus; about how, having come to use schools and hospitals as instruments, they were robbing service of nobility; about how in the pursuit of numbers they were using "material inducements" and "dangl(ing) earthly paradises in front of them (Harijans in this case) and mak(ing) promises to them which they can never keep"; about how conversion by "modern methods" "has nowadays become a business like any other" — recalling in the context "a missionary report saying how much it cost per head to convert and then presenting a budget for the 'next harvest'."

He was driven to pain and anguish by all this. A Polish student brought a photograph to Gandhiji and asked him to autograph it. There is a school run by Catholic Fathers, the student explained, "I shall help the school from the proceeds of the sale of this photograph." Returning the photograph without signing it, Mahadev Desai records in his *Diary*, Gandhiji said, "Ah, that is a different story. You do not expect me to support the Fathers in their mission of conversion? You know what they do?" "And with this he told him...," records

Mahadev Desai, "the story of the so-called conversions in the vicinity of Tiruchengodu, the desecration and demolition of the Hindu temple, how he (Gandhiji) had been requested by the International Fellowship of Faiths to forbear writing anything about the episode as they were trying to intervene, how ultimately even the intervention of that body composed mainly of Christians had failed, and how he was permitted to write about it in *Harijan*. He, however, had deliberately refrained from writing, in order not to exacerbate feeling on the matter."[2] If the Harijans had awakened to matters of the spirit and had acquired the ability to assess these things, Gandhiji told the student, "I would bless them for voluntarily embracing Christianity." But that is not what was happening. He went on to recall how the weakness of his own son had been used by persons to convert him to Islam. "The young man could see the deep pain with which Gandhiji was speaking," Mahadev Desai records. "He did not press him to give the autograph and took his leave."[3]

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[2] What the incident was can be gleaned from the conversation Gandhiji had a while earlier with a missionary nurse. "...In Hindu households," Gandhiji told her, "the advent of a missionary has meant the disruption of the family coming in the wake of change of dress, manners, language, food and drink." But is that not an old conception that you are referring to, the nurse asked, no such thing is now associated with proselytisation. "The outward condition has perhaps changed but the inward mostly remains the same," Gandhiji replied. "Vilification of Hindu religion, though subdued, is there. If there was a radical change in the missionaries' outlook, would Murdoch's books be allowed to be sold in mission depots? Are those books prohibited by missionary societies? There is nothing but vilification of Hinduism in those books. You talk of the conception being no longer there. The other day a missionary descended on a famine area with money in his pocket, distributed it among the famine-stricken, converted them to his fold, took charge of their temple and demolished it. This is outrageous. The temple could not belong to the converted, and it could not belong to the Christian missionary. But this friend goes and gets it demolished at the hands of the very men who only a little while ago believed that God was there" (*Collected Works*, Volume 61, pp. 46-7).

[3] *Collected Works*, Volume 63, pp.47-8.

# 3

# The means take over

Some Hindus sometimes lament — and many more are more frequently made to lament — the fact that they have not had *one* Prophet, *one* Text, *one* Church. There obviously are consequences of not having these. But there also are consequences of having them: The Prophet becomes The Last Word on Everything, the Text becomes dogma, and the organisation takes over. It develops a dynamic of its own. Its own, internal problems, its objectives as an organisation — its share of the market for instance — become the things that are most important for it. Its internal politics, its schisms and alliances come to determine doctrine. And as everything is to be traced back to the doctrine, these choices and changes have consequences for the laity — for on these choices and changes turns what they are going to be subjected to for their salvation.

The latest, and therefore for us the most vivid example of this sequence has been the course of the Communist movement. The course the Church has followed has been no different: it seems less dramatic only because in its case the sequence has been spread over 2000 years instead of a hundred, and because the Church has not been as important in India and in Indian discourse in the last fifty years as Communism has been. But as to the substance, there is little dif-

ference: within a short time Jesus was overshadowed by the Church; and since then the Church has become preoccupied with itself. The principal factors influencing it, the objectives its members have pursued have been not to live the life of Jesus, but the objectives characteristic of most secular organisations — numbers, market shares, the debates over one marketing strategy over another, the weighing of rituals, even of which aspect of the doctrine is to be emphasised and which is to underplayed in the light of what effect either is liable to have on the market share. The sacred secularised, from St. Francis of Assisi to a marketing agency....

*The target groups*

I have already alluded to the way the report of the Secretary of C.B.C.I. began: with "Trends in Numerical Conversions." That concern shows up in the report again and again — both in the things it chalks up as successes and in the things it seems disappointed about. As for the special targeting, a single fact noted by the Secretary will do: almost one-eleventh of the total number of Catholics in India are in Chotanagpur! As for what strikes the Church as successes and what as failures: "In Arunachal Pradesh about 10,000 people join the Church per year," the Secretary's report notes, "half of them into the Catholic Church." "In the north-east conversions among the tribals continue. During the last 30 years Catholic population increased nine fold to nine lakhs." The acknowledgement that follows shows where the emphasis has been, it nails the point: "The quality of their life and witness," the Secretary's report states, "has yet to develop."

The other special target group has been the Harijans. And that from the very beginning: as we see from the accounts of missionaries throughout the 17th, 18th, 19th centuries; as we

see from the observation in the 1911 Census Report on Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Sikkim that converts from among the four tribes — Oraons, Mundas, Kharias and Santhals — "account for nearly nine-tenths of the Indian Christians" in these provinces; as we see from the observation of the Census Commissioner in the *Census of India, 1921*: "Christianity makes little practical appeal to the caste Hindu or to the Mohammedan, and converts are drawn almost entirely from the lower classes of the Hindus and from the aboriginal tribes"; as we see from the observation in the 1931 Census Report on Bihar and Orissa that "It is well known that the primitive tribes of the province furnish the most fruitful field for Christian missionaries... In 1931 these four communities (the same ones which had been noticed in the 1911 Report, namely Oraons, Mundas, Kharias, Santhals) provided as much as 88 per cent of the total number of Indian Christians in Bihar and Orissa; and in 1921 the percentage (87) was almost exactly the same"; as we see from the facts noted in the report the Secretary and the background paper prepared for the Pune review — the latter is reproduced as Annexure II.

But again: how real and deep have the conversions been? As in the case of tribals (2000 of whom, the Madhya Pradesh Bishops have confirmed, says the report, have "relapsed", "some under fear and pressure"), so also in the case of Dalits: "Some Dalit converts," the report notes, "are going back since they lose the benefits of being a SC (Dalits)." Does this sort of "relapsing" suggest that the earlier conversion had been a real and inner transformation? Does it not instead testify to the very thing Swami Vivekananda and Gandhiji were admonishing the missionaries about — to the fact that in their quest for numbers they won the converts by dazzling some "earthly paradises" before them, by making some extravagant promises, and that when they could not fulfil the promises or

when that "earthly paradise" — in the form, for instance, of just a lowly job by the Grace of Reservations — seemed to be elsewhere, the converts gave up the new faith?

Notice the little for which these "saved" Harijans have relapsed and see how true has come the forecast of Swami Vivekananda. Addressing Americans at Detroit on 11 March 1894, on "Christianity in India," he remarked: "Those who are converted, are the few who make a sort of living by hanging round the missionaries. The converts who are not kept in service in India, cease to be converts. That is about the entire matter in a nutshell. As to the way of converting, it is absolutely absurd. The money the missionaries bring is accepted. The colleges founded by the missionaries are all right, so far as the education is concerned. But with religion it is different. The Hindu is acute; he takes the bait but avoids the hook! It is wonderful how tolerant the people are. A missionary once said, 'That is the worst of the whole business. People who are self-complacent can never be converted.' As regards the lady missionaries, they go into certain houses, get four shillings a month, teach them something of the Bible, and show them how to knit. The girls of India will never be converted. Atheism and scepticism at home is what is pushing the missionary into other lands."[1]

The background paper which was prepared for the Conference testifies to exactly the same consequence. It recalls how the conversion of "the oppressed Scheduled Caste" has been going on since the 16th century. But the converts continue to suffer, it says, as they do not have access to benefits given by the Constitution and subsequent legislation to other Dalits — the paper does not recall here the point that stung Gandhiji so sharply, but, as we shall see in a moment, it does soon enough: the point that Harijans, who had been con-

[1] *Complete Works*, Volume 8, p. 216.

verted got doubly isolated after their conversion; they got even more isolated from other Hindus and they remained isolated among the Christians too. In any case, the paper proceeds to record facts which testify both to the consequence of the facilities which were made available to the converts and to how superficial the conversions were.

Remarking on a consequence of the means which were used to secure the conversions it says: "The efforts made by the Churches in the past to improve their (the Harijan's) situation by providing basic necessaries such as housing, land, education and employment, inadvertently created in many cases a state of dependency which further undermined their ability to stand on their feet and assert their human dignity and fundamental rights." The shallowness of the transformation shows through the candour of the next paragraph: "Half of the Catholics in our country are Dalits who are discriminated both by the society and by the Church (the latter being the thing Gandhiji had seen). Certain confusion about their identity can be noticed as some assert their Dalitness while the majority hide it except for claiming government benefits." Both the Secretary's report and the background paper note the trend: "The number of the Dalit Catholics is on the decline," records the background paper; "Dalit conversions are on the decline, after the period of mass conversion," records the Secretary's report, adding, "A large number of Dalit Catholics have left the Church for various reasons, including socio-economic benefits from the government."

And can we really be surprised? The Bishops in Madhya Pradesh today confirm and lament the fact that a sizable number of converts have "relapsed". The means which had been used to secure their conversions, the fact that the conversions had been merely nominal, that they had been because of the prospect of securing material gains — could

these have left anyone in doubt about the subsequent "relapsing"? Here for instance is what the Census Report of 1911 on Bengal, Bihar and Orissa observed on the sorts of factors which were leading some tribals to adopt Christianity, and what was happening subsequently as a result:

> One reason why the aboriginal tribes are more receptive of Christianity than other communities is that a convert to Christianity is not so completely cut off from his relations and friends. In parts of Ranchi, for instance, where the Christian community is strongly represented, not only have their heathen brethren no objection to eating with the Christians, but a renegade Christian can be re-admitted into his original tribe. A further attraction is the hope of obtaining assistance from the missionaries in their difficulties and protection against the coercion of landlords. Keenly attached to their land and having few interests outside it, they believe that the missionary will stand by them in their agrarian disputes, and act as their legal advisers. It must not be imagined that Christian missionaries hold out such offers as an inducement to the aboriginals to enroll themselves in the Christian ranks, but the knowledge that the missionaries do not regard their duties as confined to the cure of souls, but also see to the welfare of their flock, has undoubtedly led to many conversions. To their credit, be it said, the missionaries have not failed in their trust, and the agrarian legislation, which is the Magna Charta of the aboriginal, is largely due to their influence. Unfortunately this belief also leads to a certain amount of desertions, self-interested converts going from one denomination to another in the hope that a change of pastors will further their interests. A number of these converts, moreover,

> have, before now, apostacized on finding out that conversion failed to secure the temporal benefits they expected, as the missionaries declined to support preposterous claims. Perverts from Christianity have been prominent among agrarian agitators, and have displayed bitter animosity against their former pastors.[2]

What seems to be the determining factor ? That the converts had been transformed by a spiritual truth ? Or that the prospect of worldly benefits had appeared before them and that they stayed or relapsed depending on whether they got those material advantages or not ?

That was from the Census Report of 1911.

Recall next the Report that the *Christian Missions Enquiry Committee*, headed by Justice M.B. Rege, submitted to the Government of Madhya Bharat in 1956. Conversion of tiny minors who were completely incapable of comprehending the virtues of Christianity; "loans" given to tribals and then children detained as surety; "loans" given against land; help — food during a drought year, access to hospitals — depending on whether the person was or would become a Christian.... The Committee observed:

> We cannot call conversions for pure material gain fraudulent in the strict sense of the word; but in our view the preaching of any religion must be based on very strong spiritual and pure ethical foundations and conversions without strong faith, must be deprecated as being unspiritual and unethical.
>
> At Raoti we had striking instances of mass conversions during famine years. Mustt. Aijanbai, one of the earliest converts and apparently an ardent propagandist

[2] L.S.S. O'Malley, *Census of India, 1911*, Volume V, *Bengal, Bihar and Orissa*, Part I, pp. 220-1.

of Christianity told us the reasons for her conversion which can best be expressed in her own words:

'The land of the Bhil area was barren, and the Hindus were not taking care of it. At that time there was a drought at our place. There was no food, no clothing. When we approached the Hindus for help, they spurned us. One could not find work even after searching. And if we cut wood, the Government would catch us. They would beat us up. We were in a very bad way. That is why we sent for the *padri*' (Translated from the original given in Hindi in the Report).

They asked the missionaries for help and were given it on a promise of conversion. The truth of this statement is evident from the Baptism registers of the period which show a number of conversions daily such as would not appear if the conversions were on the basis of the faith of individuals.

A large number of villagers from nearby villages were questioned by us at Raoti. It appears from their statements that most of the converts have been reconverted.

At Chouma (Shajapur District) a number of persons were converted during an epidemic of Cholera. That such conversions were not real is apparent from the fact that almost all of them have since been reconverted by Swami Atmanand Bharti of the Arya Samaj. The converts examined by us said that they became Christians for the advantage of medical help. It is also significant that despite conversion the Balais and Chamars would not sit together at a dinner on the occasion of the wedding of the local pastor's daughter.

And again:

The villagers whom we examined at Dhani said that

they had assurances of being supplied with cloth, medicines, money and service, as inducement to conversion. Nagaria Bhil had stood surety for a loan of Rs.200 given by the missionary to his father for his marriage. The loan was discharged from the earnings of work done for the mission. Some four or five persons were converted but there was a Panchayat wherein they were reconverted to Hinduism. Since then they were denied medical facilities at Dhani.[3]

The Committee encountered instance after instance which showed that the conversions had been nothing but nominal. After citing an account of the impressive "numerical gains" that proselytization had secured for the Church, the Committee observed,

> This impressive number of Christians would be in strong support of the work of the missions were it strictly correct. We, however, found that, barring the missionaries and the paid agents, few of the converts had even elementary knowledge of Christ and Christianity and that conversion had not affected their allegiance to the old creed or their daily life. It was frankly conceded by the Rev. R.M. Clark, General Secretary of U.C.C. Mission and other high missionaries that only a small percentage of converts were Christians in the true sense and that such conversions were not justified. It has been suggested in these circumstances, and plausibly, that the conversions are merely for the purpose of swelling the number of 'Christians' and that in this there is a danger of the type facing the Government in Assam and Jharkhand.
>
> But apart from this, we think it in the interest of the

[3] *The Christian Missions Enquiry Committee's Report*, Government of Madhya Bharat, Indore, 1956, pp. 18-19, 29-30.

missions themselves that such conversion should not be countenanced.[4]

And again:

> We are of the opinion that conversion in these circumstances can hardly be truly evangelical and bonafide. The basic causes of conversions appear to be chronic poverty, the curse of untouchability and the prospect of improvement in their conditions and in social status by conversion. Our view is fortified by the observations of Father Stephen Fuchs in his 'The Children of Hari' (p.226 & 227) where he says:
>
> 'They (Balahis) thought that by baptism they would acquire a right to help and assistance from the "rich and charitable" missionaries, without however, intending to give up the practice of their traditional religion. The missionaries, on the other hand, were at first deceived by the professions of faith and, too busy with gathering in their rich harvest, neglected to give their converts a solid instruction in the tenets of the Christian religion and to demand from them that change of heart and of their ways of living which a conversion to Christianity implies. Satisfied with the financial help and social protection which they asked for and partly obtained, from the missionaries, the Balahis wanted nothing more. They proved very elusive and stubborn, when at a later date the missionaries tried to bring them up to the standard of full Christians.
>
> 'Another reason for the difficulties that missionaries experience in the conversion of the Balahis is their strong dependence on the high caste land-owners and employers. It is natural that the Balahis look up to

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

those who provide them with the means of their livelihood as their social superiors and expect guidance and direction from them in other aspects also. They particularly feel themselves bound to follow their example in religious practice.

'No wonder, therefore, that the Christian Missions have made little headway among the Balahis inspite of promising initial successes. During the last ten years few new converts have been made by both Missions. For the missionaries now realise that to increase the numbers of their converts without strong insistence on a sincere inner conviction of the truth of Christianity was a mistake. So far only such Balahis have remained practising Christians as either went through a long training in Christian schools or are economically dependent on the Christian missionary institutions'.[5]

The Committee cited the evidence tendered by the Reverend Father concerned to the effect that he did not accept converts from among the Bhilalas as the Bhils — his main target group — do not mix with them: "In prayer the Bhils will never allow the Balais to accompany them." Taking account of this fact the Committee observed: "The fact that even after conversion a Bhil will not associate with a Balai convert even in prayer tells (its) own tale and leave(s) an impression that such conversions are not by acceptance of the doctrine of Christianity but for material gains."[6]

Notice again the unvarying pattern. That observation about the distance at which the Balai converts were being kept by other "Christians" is about the mid-1950's. Here is the Census Report of 1911 about another set of converts:

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

A social difficulty is often presented by the low origin of the converts, for, though caste is alien to Christianity, the influences of immemorial tradition still persist. In Nadia, for instance, one of the problems which the missionaries have long had to solve is the treatment of Muchis who become converts. Their customs, e.g., eating flesh of cattle that have died and been thrown outside the village are repugnant to other Christians, as well as to Hindus, and the Muchis have long been regarded as scarcely within the pale. Even the lapse of 30 years appears to have made little difference in their position. In 1878 one of the missionaries wrote regarding these Muchi Christians, as they were called, "Their Christian brethren have ever regarded them with loathing and animosity. Besides personal dislike, a selfish consideration actuated the other sections in their treatment of these brethren. They found that by denouncing the Muchis, they obtained perfect toleration, and even caste recognition, among their neighbours: but to own the Muchis and treat them as brethren in Christ would have severed the dubious tie which they wish to maintain with the outer circle. Accordingly, for all these years their effort has been to ostracise those poor brethren, and even to drive them beyond the pale of Christianity. If a native pastor ventured to baptise a Muchi infant, he was threatened with desertion by the rest of his people; when a poor Muchi brother ventured into a church, the congregation indignantly protested; if they presumed to approach the holy table, the other communicants declared they would withdraw." (*Nadia District Gazetteer*, p. 140-1.) A recent account states — "The Church, even at the present time, finds it hard to receive them in a whole-hearted way, sometimes even

refusing to eat or smoke with them; and it is an uncommon thing for inter-marriages to take place with other Christians, though there are cases on record. The problem of how to get the Bengali Church to receive the Bhratrigan (a name meaning "Brethren", now given to the Christian Muchis) in the same way in which they receive Christians from Mahomedanised or from ordinary Hindu castes, has vexed all right-thinking Christians for many years. In former years feasts were given, and all were invited and were more or less forced to eat together, but such harsh methods were not entirely crowned with success. The more successful way has been to try by education to raise the social status of the Bhratrigan." (*North India Church Missionary Gleaner*, November 1909.) With this laudable object, they have been forbidden to carry on their old industry or to eat the flesh of animals that have died: they have been taught to weave coarse cloth, to keep their houses clean, and to send their children to school.[7]

From 1911, from 1956. And here is the background paper prepared for the Pune Review in January 1994 by the Working Group of the C.B.C.I. :

> The equal dignity of all people before God, and therefore in the community of Jesus' disciples, belongs to the core of the message of God's reign. Through the centuries the Church has struggled, and often failed, in realizing true brotherhood/sisterhood in the practice of Christian life. It is a disturbing slur in the Indian Church that *caste-difference* and rivalries still go on, and at times even increase. In a special way the discrimination

[7] L.S.S. 'O Malley, *Census of India, 1911*, Volume V, *Bengal, Bihar, Orissa*, Part I, pp. 221-2.

against *Dalits* in various regions and the deep rifts resulting from it in Christian communities must be overcome lest our message lose credibility.

To continue with what the Rege Committee found in the mid-fifties: "At Umaria Pastor P. Joshi said that the converts followed their old customs and mode of worship though they had been converted..." "...Pastor Koria, however, admitted that converts were Christians only in name." "The truth of this, apart from the statements before us, was corroborated by the converts wearing necklaces of 'Tulsi' and having other patent marks of their old creed."[8]

And yet again: "The evidence of villages discussed above is typical... It was apparent to us that mostly people saw material benefits in conversions at least for appearances — the pastors at several places told us that in their presence the converts said they were Christians but directly their back was turned they said they were still adhering to the old caste..."[9]

And thus the Committee concluded: "The irresistible conclusion from the evidence before us is that though the Christian doctrine and the policy of the Missions demand that there should be instruction in the tenets of the religion before conversion, there has been in actual practice a departure from the principle both by foreign and Indian Missionaries with the result that only a negligible percentage of converts are real Christians."[10]

Now, there are two morals to this. The first was put well by the Committee: "We are of opinion that there must be a thorough heart searching in the Non-Christian communities and particularly the Hindus for finding out the reasons for the

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[8] *The Christian Missions Enquiry Committee's Report, op.cit.*, pp. 34-5.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 37-8.

tendency of the ignorant masses to quit their fold. Intolerance and apathy towards the lot of the masses must disappear and a truly human approach made to arrive at a solution; and a strong effort must be made by the Government and the people to raise the intellectual, moral and social standards of the backward classes." The other moral is just as telling: such having been the motivations and shallowness of the conversion, can the "relapsing" come as a surprise?

The poor and downtrodden, the innocent and illiterate came having been told the shop is here; seeing it elsewhere, they leave. What has this kind of "conversion" and "relapsing" got to do with Jesus? Just as: What had the mass conversion that Dr. Ambedkar directed, or the one we witnessed at Patna recently to do with the Buddha, even with Buddhism? And there is the telling point: Umpteen commentators — from Sardar Panikkar to official committees of inquiry, to say nothing of Swami Vivekananda and Gandhiji — alerted the Church to the shallowness of this pursuit, they forewarned the Church about what the consequences of the pursuit would be. The Church's reactions were twofold, and twofold alone:

- ❒ It denounced the commentators and, as in the case of, say, Sardar Panikkar and the Committee which Chief Justice Niyogi headed, it attributed their analyses to a congenital prejudice of these persons against the Church;
- ❒ It undertook, as we shall see, a more thorough rationalisation of its targeting these groups — by invoking "liberation theology" and the rest.

But this is exactly what communists the world over used to do. Could the consequences for the missionaries and for their followers be any different from what they eventually turned out to be for communists and *their* followers?

*The Church itself*

The means have begun to bear down on the Church itself. Notice what the report of the Secretary, even as it records the impressive increase in the services and service centres, says about them:

> The old Churches are very busy and burdened with administration, and pastoral work. They have little time for proclamation *Ad Gentes*.
>
> - ❒ During the last 40 years dioceses have grown into 125 [56 in 1950].
> - ❒ Dispensaries and hospitals have increased to 10 fold.
> - ❒ Growth of high schools is sixfold.
> - ❒ Colleges and institutions of higher learning increased 10 fold.
> - ❒ Preoccupation with administration diminishes the quality of Christian witness.
> - ❒ As a consequence many Church institutions appear to the public as centres of power, money and prestige.

The paper prepared by C.B.C.I's Working Group testifies to the same consequence: "We observe a steep increase in the institutional development of the Church — pastoral, educational, medical, social," it notes. "It reveals vitality, but threatens to reduce the personal growth and involvement of the people and to turn the Christian community too much into an organization." Returning to the theme later, it remarks, "The danger has become acute in our Church which is over institutional, activist and result-oriented. People search for the living God..." The same apprehension breaks through in what it says about the area where the Church has been most successful: Chotanagpur. It recounts the success

in this region, and adds, "However, the present emphasis on pastoral care mainly limited to the Christian faithful has affected the missionary movement which was more evident in the pre-independence era. Many feel that proclamation does not appear to be a priority in the mission of this local Church. Instead building up the Church through pastoral activities becomes the all-absorbing feature."

The quest for numbers has led to another trend which will eventually make the transformations even more superficial: as in the case of the American evangelists, the Church here is coming to rely more and more on "Charismatic Proclamation". Thousands are gathered in a large stadium or ground by the usual methods. A preacher delivers an emotional, fiery exhortation: Sin; Damnation; The End is Near; Repent in Time; Be saved by Jesus — tonight, now; Come Hither towards the stage.... Some swoon, those who could not walk, walk.... The Secretary notes:

> Charismatic Proclamation. Retreat movement starting in Potta, Kerala. During the past decade many lakhs have participated.
>
> ❒ Potta team is traveling and preaching outside Kerala (India and abroad).
>
> ❒ Powerful form of witnessing, praying and healing.
>
> ❒ Many non-Christians actively participate and give witness. Some ask for baptism.

Where Jesus walked on water, the Church, in its zeal to convert larger and larger numbers, has taken to writing on water. The Secretary's report itself asks: "Great emotionalism. Will this last for a long time?"

To keep up the scale of conversions requires, as we saw, a large organization: 4 million full time Christian workers, a

quarter million missionaries, 4500 major seminaries.... Not only does management of these numerous organizations and these vast numbers take up much of the time, all the problems germane to large organizations seep in and take over.

The vast properties that are at the command of this vast organization? The scandal which engulfed the Vatican's bank could not be peculiar to the Vatican alone. Even if nothing unmentionable ever happens, the very magnitude of the assets recoils. At first the assets carried conviction with the destitute Harijans and tribals: these missionaries are so rich, surely we will benefit by going along with them. But the assets available to the Church for use within India were never enough to provide more than marginal help to the millions of Harijans and tribals who needed that help. The very prosperity of the Church then became a ground for resentment: they have so much, they give us so little. The contrast between the opulence of the Vatican, to say nothing of the ostentation of the American evangelists, and the indigence in which so many Christians are living in India strikes even a non-Christian. Even apart from this contrast, the assets of the Church *per se* must push many away — specially in a country like India which for thousands of years has revered austerity.

Jurisdictional possessiveness among different parts of the Church? Notice the urgency in what the Secretary's report has to say:

> Rite conflicts (the differences among the main branches of the Church in India) seem to be a major scandal. Instead of being a sign of unity, it is a sign of division. Proclamation of Jesus is at cross roads. Many priests and lay people are losing faith in the leadership of some Bishops. Lack of credibility due to rite tensions [See the letter of admonition from the Holy Father in November 1993].

The vacuums that seize large hierarchy-bound organizations? Read what the Secretary says:

> With the Post Vatican new theology of the local Church, Bishop is the final authority — responsible for proclamation. If he is not seriously interested, there is no authority in India with a common vision and coordinating authority to direct proclamation. The traditional role of *Propaganda Fide* is not replaced by anyone in India. We are at a state of fragmentation. The C.B.C.I. Commission for Proclamation has no legal authority. Who will coordinate the work of Proclamation at all India level?

Again, the note of urgency.

The condition of an organization that has grown large pursuing numbers? The Secretary's report, based as it is on survey reports among the clergy throughout India, says:

> Inspite of the theology of people of God, in the old Churches the style of exercising authority in the Church seems to be pre-Vatican. Many Bishops function as bureaucrats. Often the quality of relations does not inspire trust in the leadership nor is it favourable for building communities.

The examples can be multiplied ten-fold. But that is best left as an exercise for the reader : even a cursory reading of the paper which the C.B.C.I.'s Working Group prepared for the Pune Review, and which is reproduced as Annexure II at the end of this volume, will show the extent of bureaucratisation of the Church.

*The new factor*

Thus the pursuit of conversions has not helped the converts. And it has bureaucratized the Church itself.

There is of course the other point: it has been a perennial source of tension among communities, it has fomented bitterness towards Christians, in particular towards the missionaries.

And now that Middle Eastern money is being used for spurring conversions to Islam, the backlash to conversions *per se* is certain to be even more intense: Meenakshipuram was a pointer.

*What should be done?*

What then should missionaries do about this vexed question? Gandhiji's advice was fivefold, and it remains as pertinent today.

The best thing of course is that you give up conversion altogether, he said. The extent to which he said he would go if he had the power varied: ranging from, "In India under Swaraj I have no doubt that foreign missionaries will be at liberty to do their proselytising, as I would say, in the wrong way; but they would be expected to bear with those who, like me, may point out that in their opinion the way is wrong," to the unambiguous, "If I had power and could legislate, I should certainly stop all proselytising."[11] But the variations were in regard to what *he* would do if he had power. In regard to what the missionaries should do, his advice was always the same: stop conversion altogether as it is "the deadliest poison that ever sapped the fountain of truth."

[11] *Collected Works*, Volume 46, p.110, and Volume 61, pp.46-7, respectively.

Second, if convert you must, direct your efforts to those who are in a position to assess these matters; do not make the poor and illiterate and desperate the targets of your campaign. "I know of representatives of different religions standing on the same platform and vying with one another to catch the Harijan ear," he said. "To dignify this movement with the name of spiritual hunger is a travesty of truth. Arguing on the highest plane I said to Dr. Mott (who had been in the forefront of missionary activities in the 1930s), if they wanted to convert Harijans, had they not better begin to convert me? I am a trifle more intelligent than they, and therefore more receptive to the influences of reason that could be brought to bear upon me. But to approach the Pulayas and Pariahs with their palsied hands and paralysed intelligence is no Christianity. No, whilst our reform movement is going on, all religious-minded people should say: 'Rather than obstruct their work, let us support them in their work'." The missionary Dr. John R. Mott asked, "But must we not serve them?" Gandhiji said, "Of course, you will, but not making conversion the price of your service." Quoting Christ to the effect, "Preach and Teach," Mott said, "The whole Christian religion is the religion of sharing our life, and how can we share without supplementing our lives with words?" Gandhiji replied, "Then what they are doing in Travancore is correct? There may be difference of degree in what you say and what they are doing, but there is no difference of quality. If you must share it with the Harijan, why don't you share it with Thakkarbapa and Mahadev? Why should you go to the untouchable and try to exploit this upheaval? Why not come to us instead?" "I strongly resent," Gandhiji told missionaries who asked him about conversions, "these overtures to utterly ignorant men. I can perhaps understand overtures made to me, as indeed they are

being made. For they can reason with me and I can reason with them. But I certainly resent the overtures made to Harijans. When a Christian preacher goes and says to a Harijan that Jesus was the only begotten Son of God, he will give him a blank stare. Then he holds out all kinds of inducements which debase Christianity."[12]

Third, even for that effort, Gandhiji said, it would be better for non-Indian missionaries to return to their countries and attend to problems there. Those problems are intense, and they are vast enough to engage all the missionaries that can be made available there. "Would you be really happy if we stayed at home?," an American Missionary asked Gandhiji. "I cannot say that," Gandhiji replied. "But I will certainly say that I have never been able to understand your going out of America. Is there nothing to do there?" "Even in America there is enough work for educational work," the missionary said. "That is a fatal confession," observed Gandhiji. "You are not a superfluity there. But for the curious position your Church has taken you would not be here..."[13]

Fourth, in doing any kind of work among the people, Gandhiji counselled the missionaries, compliment the faith of the people, do not undermine it. Do not de-nationalize them.

Finally, instead of the life of the Church, live the life of Jesus, of piety, of the Sermon on the Mount. Let that life, that example persuade people to embrace Christianity if they will, not these vending devices.

In view of the way things are — the fragile condition of the apparatus of governance today, the use of collateral devices for securing conversions as in Meenakshipuram, the

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[12] On this point see, for instance, *Collected Works*, Volume 64, pp.37, 400.

[13] *Collected Works*, Volume 63, pp.90-4.

intense reaction that such activity is fomenting, I would make bold to supplement Gandhiji's list with two further points.

Desist in particular from targeting groups and areas which are unsettled. Work among them, and in those areas is bound to end up exacerbating instability, and thereby fuelling the apprehension that missionaries are out to undermine India. If the call is irresistible for working among these groups and in such areas — the North-East for instance — make certain that you persuade the people to abide by the methods of Jesus and Gandhi.

Second, as you are certain that you are using nothing but reason and evidence to gain converts to Christianity but as you cannot be sure that others are not using other devices, add your mite to the demand that conversions should be open to scrutiny — that, as in the case of every other act the consequences of which go beyond oneself, the State must have the authority to ensure that force and fraud and allurement have not been used to beguile or compel the unwary.

And there is the other point — to which we shall turn.

# 4

# The wages of calumny

The traditions of India were rich as can be. They had attained insights of the first water: a person who has reflected on what the Buddha has to say on the workings of the mind for instance, one who has even a little acquaintance with Buddhist works on psychology will find the writings of, say, Freud to be high-school level reductionism. The traditions informed all of life: the mingling of literature, art, music and religion is a ready instance.

And they were inclusive. A person devoted to a tree was not traduced as an "animist", a person devoted to a bull or an elephant, or a lion, or a snake or even the lowly mouse was not laughed away. The objects of his devotion were received with reverence — they became parts of a rich pantheon: the bull was honoured as the mount of Shiva and one could approach Shiva only after paying obeisance to Nandi, the elephant became the head of Ganesha and the mouse his mount, the lion became the head of Narasimha and the mount of Durga, the swan of Saraswati, the peacock of Kartikeya, the snakes became the necklace and amulets of Shiva, the girdle of Ganesha. The colours which were ascribed to the Gods no doubt had mystic significance, as Sri Aurobindo used to remind us. But they reflected also the catholicity which marked the day-to-day life of the people:

the colours reflected a confluence of the colours of the people: Rama and Krishna were pictured as having been blue, Subramaniya at Tirupati, the child Krishna at Nathdwara, Kali in the East, Padmanabhaswami at Thiruvanathapuram were pictured as pitch dark....

Nor was this artifice. The inclusiveness flowed from deep conviction, from what had been experienced at the deepest — it flowed from experiences which yielded premises which were the exact opposites of the religions originating elsewhere. There are many levels to reality, the tradition taught. There are many ways to realise it. The ones who have gone before have left books and suggested practices which will help you. But these are just aids, and there are many of them as persons with different temperaments, at different stages of preparation will find one device more helpful than the other. You must yourself understand yourself, and gauge the stage at which you are. By divining your nature and your progress you must assess the suitability of the device, of the text. Such was the teaching. And the aim was not to give license, it was to assign responsibility. The call was the call to be "mindful", to look within. The teaching gave an unassailable sphere of autonomy to the individual.

Everything in human affairs ossifies. Many things in this tradition did too. But no one could impede reform by an appeal to the "fundamentals", for these fundamentals made the individual's own, inner experience the ultimate referrant. That everything should reform and transform, the tradition regarded as natural. Differences were harmonised through discourse — witness Shankara's journeys and the *shaastraarths* on the way.

That spirit was not abandoned even in regard to Islam, in spite of its claims to exclusivity and its campaigns of *jehad*: the Sufis who had been set upon in one Islamic country after

another, so much so that secretiveness had become their mark, they did not just find a home here, they found honour, reverence.

But all this the missionaries traduced. The inclusiveness they condemned as being a sinister stratagem to swallow up other religions. The efflorescence of different speculations they condemned as cacophony. The openness and tentativeness they condemned as intellectual flabbiness. The inner-directed search they condemned as morbid life-denial. The offering of many ways they condemned as unsettled mush. The many gods and goddesses they condemned as chaos. What had become the norm for Islam was now made the norm for Christianity: freedom of speech meant the freedom only to laud it, freedom of inquiry meant the freedom to discover only its glories. The pressures were less overt than they had been in the case of Islam, but they were no less potent. Asymmetry was the principle: as in the case of Islam, conversion was held to be, and acted upon as something that was an essential principle of Christianity; but when a person like Swami Vivekananda or Swami Shradhananda argued in favour of taking back into the Hindu fold the converts who wanted to return, they were condemned as persons who were inventing a practice for which there was no warrant in Hinduism!

*A typical obscuration*

What an awareness of the means by which the persons had been converted entails on the matter, what the new ecumenical premise of the Church to which we shall revert later entails will be evident from Gandhiji's responses to a questioner. Should "Hindus who have once renounced their faith for some reason or other and joined Islam or Christian-

ity" be reconverted if they "sincerely repent and want to come back," the querist asked. Should "Lakhs of Depressed Class people in South India" who "have joined Christianity wholesale" but who "feel it worthwhile to readopt their ancestral faith" be taken back? Should a Hindu who "was made to join another faith for certain material conditions" and "feels disillusioned" be welcomed when he "comes and knocks at our door?" What should be done with "Hindu boys and girls" who have been brought up and converted in Christian or Muslim orphanages and who now "approach us for *shuddhi*?"

"In my opinion," Gandhiji observed, "they are not examples of real conversion. If a person through fear, compulsion, starvation or for material gain or consideration goes over to another faith, it is a misnomer to call it conversion. Most cases of mass conversion, of which we have heard so much during the past two years, have been to my mind false coin...I would, therefore, unhesistatingly re-admit to the Hindu fold all such repentants without much ado, certainly without any *shuddhi*...And as I believe in the equality of all great religions of the earth, I regard no man as polluted because he has forsaken the branch on which he was sitting and gone over to another of the same tree. If he comes to the original branch, he deserves to be welcomed and not told that he had committed sin by reason of his having forsaken the family to which he belonged. In so far as he may be deemed to have erred, he has sufficiently purged himself of it when he repents of the error and retraces his step."[1]

Swami Vivekananda had affirmed the same point even more categorically. "'I want to see you, Swami', I began," wrote the editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, "'on this matter of receiving back into Hinduism those who have been perverted from it. Is it your opinion that they should be received?"

[1] *Collected Works*, Volume 66, pp.163-4.

"Certainly," said the Swami, "they can and ought to be taken."

He sat gravely for a moment, thinking, and then resumed. "Besides," he said, "we shall otherwise decrease in numbers. When the Mohammedans first came, we are said — I think on the authority of Ferishta, the oldest Mohammedan historian — to have been six hundred millions of Hindus. Now we are about two hundred millions. And then every man going out of the Hindu pale is not only a man less, but an enemy the more... Again, the vast majority of Hindu perverts to Islam and Christianity are perverts by the sword, or the descendants of these. It would be obviously unfair to subject these to disabilities of any kind. As to the case of born aliens, did you say? Why, born aliens have been converted in the past by crowds, and the process is still going on..."[2]

But on the telling of the missionaries the road could only be one way: conversion was of the very essence of Christianity, so we missionaries must convert; but Hinduism does not provide for conversion, and so you must neither convert nor re-convert! That over the millennia thousands upon thousands had been taken into Hinduism — "converted" — was put out of sight, save when it was expedient to portray Hinduism as a religion that diabolically swallows up other religions. That the texts had been written when there had been no occasion to readmit persons into the Hindu fold as there was no other religion which was converting them away, that was obscured. So, the traffic had to be one-way only!

### *The extent of the calumny*

The viciousness of the distortions and misrepresentations of the missionaries, the virulence of their abuse, the

[2] *Complete Works*, Volume 5, pp.233-5.

length of time over which they kept up the barrage — we cannot imagine these today. Swami Vivekananda had to face these at every turn, Gandhiji knew them well.

"If all India stands up," Swami Vivekananda told the Christians in America about this propaganda, "and takes all the mud that is at the bottom of the Indian Ocean and throws it up against the Western countries, it will not be doing an infinitesimal part of that which you are doing to us..." "It is not true that I am against any religion," the Swami told the Madras audience on his return from the U.S. "It is equally untrue that I am hostile to the Christian missionaries in India. But I protest against certain of their methods of raising money in America. What is meant by those pictures in the school-books for children where the Hindu mother is painted as throwing her children to the crocodiles in the Ganga? The mother is black, but the baby is painted white, to arouse more sympathy, and get more money. What is meant by those pictures which paint a man burning his wife at a stake with his own hands, so that she may become a ghost and torment the husband's enemy? What is meant by the pictures of huge cars crushing over human beings? The other day a book was published for children in this country (America), where one of these gentlemen tells a narrative of his visit to Calcutta. He says he saw a car running over fanatics in the streets of Calcutta. I have heard one of these gentlemen preach in Memphis that in every village of India there is a pond full of the bones of little babies. What have the Hindus done to these disciples of Christ that every Christian child is taught to call the Hindus 'vile', and 'wretches', and the most horrible devils on earth? Part of the Sunday School education for children here consists in teaching them to hate everybody who is not a Christian, and the Hindus especially, so that, from their very childhood they may subscribe their pennies

to the missions.... Look again at the books published in Madras against the Hindu religion. If a Hindu writes one such line against the Christian religion, the missionaries will cry fire and vengeance."[3]

That is Swami Vivekananda talking about missionary propaganda a hundred years ago. And here is what Ram Swarup reads in a recent pronouncement of the Texas based *Gospel for Asia*: "The Indian sub-continent with one billion people, is a living example of what happens when Satan rules the entire culture... India is one vast purgatory in which millions of people... are literally living a cosmic lie! Could Satan have devised a more perfect system for causing misery?"

The blacker they painted — and paint — India, and Hinduism in particular, the more the sincere are inspired to leave their homes and take up the task of saving souls that are in such torment so far away, the easier it is to raise funds, and means of all kinds are automatically rationalised.

*Is it any different?*

That is one point: the calumny was based on falsehood through and through. But there is another point too: Is the Christianity of the missionaries different from what they were calumnising?

A Hindu bowing to a statue of Durga is a superstitious idolator. But a Christian beseeching a statue of Virgin Mary is touched by divine devotion? A Hindu bowing to a stone as Hanuman, and circumambulating it is an ignorant idolator. But a Muslim prostrating to the Black Stone at the Kaba and circumambulating it is one who has broken through to a higher level of spirituality? How precisely Gandhiji put the point to a Christian correspondent: "Because I do not find a

[3] *Complete Works*, Volume 4, pp. 344-5.

particular thing helpful for me, I may not be indifferent about others and not take the trouble of knowing whether it is helpful for them," he wrote. "I know that that particular form of idolatry is helpful for millions, not because they are less developed than I am, but because they are differently constituted. What must not be forgotten about me is that not only do I not consider idol-worship to be a sin, but I know that in some form or other it is a condition of our being. The difference between one form of worship and another is a difference in degree and not in kind. Mosque-going or church-going is a form of idol-worship. Veneration of the Bible, the Koran, the Gita and the like is idol-worship and even if you don't use a book or a building but draw a picture of divinity in your imagination and attribute certain qualities, it is again idol-worship and I refuse to call the worship of the one who has a stone image a grosser form of worship. Learned judges have been known to have such images in their own homes. A philosopher like Pandit Malaviya will not eat his meal without offering worship to the household deity. It would be both arrogant and ignorant to look down upon such worship as superstition. Again in the imagination of the worshipper, God is in a consecrated stone and not in the other stones lying about him. Even so, the sanctuary in a Church is more sacred than any other place in it. You can multiply for yourself instances of this character. All this is a plea not for laxity in thought or worship, but it is a plea for a definite recognition of the fact that all forms of honest worship are equally good and equally efficient for the respective worshippers. Time is gone for the exclusive possession of right by an individual or a group. God is no respecter of forms or words, for He is able to penetrate our actions and our speech and read and understand our thoughts, even when we do not understand them ourselves and it is first our

thoughts that matter to him."[4]

And to a Roman Catholic Father: "As for idol-worship, you cannot do without it in some form or other. Why does a Mussalman give his life for defending a mosque which he calls a house of God? And why does a Christian go to a Church and when he is required to take an oath swear by the Bible? Not that I see any objection to it. And what is it if not idolatry to give untold riches for building mosques and tombs? And what do the Roman Catholics do when they kneel before Virgin Mary and before saints — quite imaginary figures in stone or painted on canvas or glass?" The Father made a distinction between 'veneration' and 'worship': "When I worship God," "I acknowledge Him a creator and greater than any human being." Gandhiji observed, "Even so, it is not the stone we worship but it is God we worship in images of stone or metal however crude they may be." The Father said, "But the villagers worship stone as God". Gandhiji explained, "No, I tell you they do not worship anything that is less than God. When you kneel before Virgin Mary and ask for her intercession, what do you do? You ask to establish contact with God through a stone image. I can understand your asking for the Virgin's intercession. Why are Mussalmans filled with awe and exultation when they enter a mosque? Why, is not the whole universe a mosque?. ...But I understand and sympathise with the Muslims. It is their way of approach to God. The Hindus have their own way of approach to the same Eternal Being. Our media of approach are different but that does not make Him different."[5] But the Hindus, the missionaries pronounced, are caught in fiendish idolatry, and those the Church has lifted to Christianity have been liberated from it!

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[4] *Collected Works*, Volume 52, pp.95-6.
[5] *Collected Works*, Volume 64, pp. 421-3.

A Hindu bathing in the Ganges and taking its water for rituals and ablutions is a primitive, superstitious nature-worshipper. But the Christian seeking cures from the water at Lourdes, and the Muslim seeking it from the water of the Zam Zam at Kaba and taking it for ablutions and the rest, they are merely being scientific? The rich symbolism of the Hindu rituals, of the motifs was dismissed as mumbo-jumbo. And what of the symbolism of the Eucharist — of eating the "body" of Jesus and drinking his "blood"? How telling is the contrast that Swami Vivekananda drew between the two ways. Addressing an audience at Detroit on 21 February 1894, he said:

> There is one thing which is very dissimilar between us and Christians, something which we never taught. That is the idea of salvation through Jesus' blood, or cleansing by any man's blood. We had our sacrifice as the Jews had. Our sacrifice means simply this: Here is some food I am going to eat, and until some portion is offered to God, it is bad; so I offer the food. This is the pure and simple idea. But with the Jew the idea is that his sin be upon the lamb, and let the lamb be sacrificed and him go scot-free. We never developed this beautiful idea in India, and I am glad we did not. I, for one, would not come to be saved by such a doctrine. If anybody would come and say, 'Be saved by my blood,' I would say to him, 'My brother, go away; I will go to hell; I am not a coward to take innocent blood to go to heaven; I am ready for hell.' So that doctrine never cropped up amongst us, and our prophet says that whenever evil and immorality prevail on earth, He will come down and support His children; and this He is doing from time to time and from place to place. And

wherever on earth you see an extraordinary holy man trying to uplift humanity, know that He is in him.

Then the man who is bowing down before the idol. It is not in the same sense as you have heard of the Babylonian and the Roman idolatry. It is peculiar to the Hindus. The man is before the idol, and he shuts his eyes and tries to think, 'I am He; I have neither life nor death; I have neither father nor mother; I am not bound by time or space; I am Existence infinite, Bliss infinite, and Knowledge infinite; I am He, I am He. I am not bound by books, or holy places, or pilgrimages, or anything whatsoever; I am Existence Absolute, Bliss Absolute; I am He, I am He.' This he repeats and then says, 'O Lord, I cannot conceive Thee in myself; I am a poor man.'

You may take the most learned man you have and ask him to think of spirit as spirit; he cannot. You may imagine spirit, he may imagine spirit. It is impossible to think of spirit without training. Can you think of spirit as spirit?[6]

But believing that my sins are washed away by Christ having been put to death, that is high spirituality; and bowing before an idol in humility every day and returning with the resolve to cleanse one's conduct — why that is mumbo-jumbo, superstition, and worse.

Caste and untouchability are the peculiarity of Hinduism, the missionaries insisted. Christianity (and of course Islam on the telling of its advocates) is the religion of equality — it does not recognise castes. In fact, castes survive among Christians and Muslims to this day — as the Supreme Court has narrated in its recent judgement on Reservations.

[6] *Complete Works*, Volume 8, pp. 290-11.

And the Church (as well as advocates of Islam), having proclaimed for two centuries that untouchability was a curse peculiar to Hinduism, has been in the forefront in demanding that benefits given to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes must be made available to Christian Scheduled Castes and Christian Scheduled Tribes also! Not one missionary organisation has protested that by extending caste-based Reservations to Christians (and Muslims) the Supreme Court has put the axe to a basic tenet of Christianity (and Islam)!

Swami Vivekananda, Gandhiji and other reformers often drew the attention of the missionaries to these blind-spots. They made another vital observation. In condemning and calumnising a Hindu practice like idolatry for instance, and the beliefs behind it, the missionaries missed the deep potential which was inherent in it. As the same human pains and predicaments made their communities — and them personally — seek the same sorts of solace in the same sorts of devices, Swami Vivekananda explained to the missionaries, soon enough you become idolators of the most primitive kind. The idol as an aid for gathering one's awareness, as the embodiment of values which by honouring it and reflecting on it one imbibes; the reverence for the cow as the entry-point from which to develop reverence for all animal life, the reverence for the *peepul* as the entry-point from which to develop reverence for all inanimate nature; each of these as devices to break down the barriers between man and animals and inanimate materials; the harmonious view of life which results from these in contrast to the instrumental view of all men and matter which man-centred traditions (Christianity, Islam more so, and Marxism-Leninism most of all) inculcate; each of these as a device, a stepping-stone in breaking down the barrier between mind and matter — this

great healing potential, this potential for opening horizons of a vast and deep knowledge is foreclosed by the calumny. And the statue of Virgin Mary becomes a mere wish-fulfilling thing.

How true the warning of the *Dhammapada*: "A wrong action may not bring its reaction at once, even as fresh milk turns not sour at once: like a smouldering fire concealed under ashes it consumes the wrong-doer..."

# The Division of Labour

# 5

# Rulers and the Church

On the surface there were many disagreements between British administrators and the missionaries, and between them and the Indologists. There were disagreements within each group too: among Indologists, for instance, scholars like Max Muller, H.H. Wilson, Monier Williams wanted the greater emphasis to be placed on Sanskrit — Wilson argued cogently that it was through Sanskrit that regional languages like Bengali were best taught; others urged that the balance be shifted overwhelmingly away from the "dead" classical languages and towards regional languages and the literature in them.

Each school urged its point of view with great emphasis, often, as we shall see, with great scholarship and eloquence. And the groups often smarted at, and were driven to exasperation by what the others were doing. For quite a while officials of the East India Company kept missionaries out of the territories which were falling to the Company. Later, while the missionaries were allowed to operate, the Government insisted on being neutral as between religions: the Bible was not to be taught in Government schools and colleges it instructed, for instance, and teachers in these establishments were not to engage in religious instruction even during their spare time. Similarly, the Indologists busied

themselves with burrowing into heathen texts rather than using their time like professional missionaries in persuading the heathens about the virtues of Christianity.

A surface reading therefore suggests a tugging and pulling in different directions. But in fact none of the three groups had any difference over the ultimate objectives — the conversion of the heathens to Christianity, and the extension and perpetuation of British rule. The disagreements were only about what would be the more effective ways of ensuring the objectives: each group, seeing the matter from within its own specialization, naturally emphasised one set of measures more than the other. But even on the means, a complete understanding was soon enough attained. Each group realised that the labour had to be divided up, each came to see how the restraints the other group was urging were necessary for the success of *that* group's work, and how that *latter* work was necessary for the success of its own endeavours. All eventually came to agree on the following:

- ❒ India is a den of ignorance, inequity and falsehood;
- ❒ The principal cause of this state of affairs is Hinduism;
- ❒ Hinduism is kept going by the Brahmins;
- ❒ As the people are in such suffering, and also because Jesus in his parting words has bound us to do so, it is a duty to deliver them to Christianity;
- ❒ For this it is Hinduism which has to be vanquished;
- ❒ For this it is — to anticipate words that we shall have occasion to recall — "the walls of the mighty fortress of Brahminism" which are to be "encircled, undermined, and finally stormed by the soldiers of the Cross";
- ❒ To do so the most effective weapon will of course be the enlargement, consolidation and indefinite prolongation of British rule;

- Therefore whatever is necessary for the consolidation and extension of this rule must take precedence; for the Government to exert directly to spread Christianity will ignite resentment among the natives and, so, it should maintain a position of neutrality;
- Its contribution will none the less be decisive; to take just the Government schools, their emphasis on the English language itself will open students to Christianity, their imparting modern notions of science and geography will by itself undermine and eventually finish Hinduism — for it is not a religion that can stand "a moment's scrutiny", for it is the one religion in which the foundational concepts, the philosophies, the beliefs, down to the day-to-day practices are so mixed up with, in which they are so dependent on falsehood and error that they cannot survive once the absurdity of the Hindu notions of time, space, geography, history are shown up; and the latter are bound to be not just shown up but utterly destroyed with the first wafts of western learning;
- The work of the missionaries will in turn help in the consolidation and perpetuation of British rule: not just the converts but all those who have been weaned on western learning and values will seek the perpetuation of that rule for their own interest;
- The work of the scholars — of missionary-scholars as well as of scholar-missionaries — will, to once again use the telling expression which we shall have occasion to recall, expose the roots of Brahminism and thereby uproot everything that has flowed from it;
- In the natural course, the missionaries will be focussing particularly on the outcastes and on tribals — these are the ones who are most oppressed and therefore most in need of the saving-touch of Christ, they are also the

ones who are most liable to respond; while those in the greatest need will thereby be helped, Hindu society — such as it is — will be rent asunder;

- The work of the scholars will have a similar effect: it will on the one hand show up how these groups can never expect relief and justice within the Hindu pale — consigning them to wretchedness being an article of the Hindu faith; on the other hand, scholarly work devoted to the ancillary traditions — to languages other than Sanskrit and Persian, to religions other than Hinduism, like Sikhism — will of its own arouse different sections to their distinctiveness, and thereby help achieve both objectives: it will widen the earth-faults in Hinduism and thus prepare the way for Christianity; it will convert the fissures between the people into earth-faults and thus perpetuate British rule.

Having been brought up on books which made British conquest of India to have been an accident, if not something which the Indians dragged the unwilling British to accomplish, I myself would have been inclined to view a listing of this kind as an *ex post* construction, as reading a design into events which had happened spontaneously and quite independently of one another. One look at the writings of the principal scholars, of the chief administrators, and most of all at the writings and memoranda of missionaries and missionary societies is enough to dispel that pre-supposition.

*The well-known Minute*

We are all familiar with Macaulay's *Minute* of 1835: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern;

a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." The *Minute* was laced with utter contempt for India, in particular for Hinduism, for our languages and literature: of course Macaulay did not know any of those languages, he had not read one of those books, and his ideas about Hinduism had been formed from the calumny of missionaries and such of it as he had chosen to see. But the breezy, sweeping damnation — even a century and a half later the imperialist swagger takes one's breath away.

"...the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are moreover so poor and rude that until they are enriched from some other quarter it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them," Macaulay wrote. "I have never found one among them (the 'Orientalists' who wanted stress to be placed on oriental learning)," he wrote, "who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." "It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say," he wrote, "that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books which have been written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgement used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same." He wrote of "...languages in which by universal confession there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared to our own...; systems (of scientific knowledge) which whenever they differ from those of Europe differ for the worse;... medical doctrines which would move laughter in girls at an English Boarding-School, history abounding with kings thirty feet high and reigns 30,000 years long, and geography made

up of seas of treacle and seas of butter... a literature admitted to be of small intrinsic value... (one) that inculcates the most serious errors on the most important subjects... hardly reconcilable with reason, with morality... fruitful of monstrous superstitions... false history, false astronomy, false medicine... in company with a false religion..."

The remedy was to teach the Indians English and through that to open their minds to modern, western learning. "We are not without history to guide us," Macaulay wrote. "History furnishes several analogous cases, and they all teach the same lesson. There are in modern times, to go no further, two memorable instances of a great impulse given to the mind of a whole society — of prejudice overthrown — of knowledge diffused — of taste purified — of arts and sciences planted in countries which had recently been ignorant and barbarous."

"The first instance to which I refer," he continued, "is the great revival of letters among the western nations at the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. At that time almost everything that was worth reading was contained in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Had our ancestors acted as the Committee of Public Instruction has hitherto acted; had they neglected the language of Cicero and Tacitus; had they confined their attention to the old dialects of our own island; had they printed nothing, and taught nothing at the universities but chronicles in Anglo-Saxon, and romances in Norman French, would England have been what she now is? What the Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of More and Ascham, our tongue is to the people of India. The literature of England is now more valuable than that of classical antiquity. I doubt whether the Sanscrit literature be as valuable as that of our Saxon and Norman progenitors. In some departments — in history, for

example — I am certain that it is much less so."

"Another instance may be said to be still before our eyes," he wrote. "Within the last hundred and twenty years a nation which had previously been in a state as barbarous as that in which our ancestors were before the Crusades has gradually emerged from the ignorance in which it was sunk, and has taken its place among civilised communities. I speak of Russia. There is now in that country a large educated class, abounding with persons fit to serve the state in the highest functions, and in no wise inferior to the most accomplished men who adorn the best circles of Paris and London. There is reason to hope that this vast Empire, which in the time of our grandfathers was probably behind the Punjab may in the time of our grandchildren be pressing close on France and Britain in the career of improvement. And how was this change effected ? Not by flattering national prejudices; not by feeding the mind of the young Muscovite with the old woman's stories which his rude fathers had believed; not by filling his head with lying legends about St. Nicholas; not by encouraging him to study the great question, whether the world was or was not created on the 13th of September; not by calling him 'a learned native', when he has mastered all these points of knowledge; but by teaching him those foreign languages in which the greatest mass of information had been laid up, and thus putting all that information within his reach. The languages of western Europe civilised Russia. I cannot doubt that they will do for the Hindoo what they have done for the Tartar."

That clearly-sighted object — to form "a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect"; those prejudices about the worthlessness and worse of everything Indian; and a clear prescription: English, and through it western learning. That pre-

scription, as is well known, became official policy. On 7 March 1835, Lord William Bentinck decreed that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India."

But the question in Macaulay's mind was not just of perpetuating British imperial control over India: his aim was to rescue Indians from Hinduism, he was certain about the superiority of Christianity and about the boons that would follow as it spread in India. For, he declared four years later in his essay, "Gladstone on Church and State," the heathenism of India is "more cruel, more licentious, more fruitful of absurd right, and pernicious laws" than that of any other part of the world. The people of India, he declared in "The Gates of Somnauth", are "idolators, blindly attached to doctrines and rites which, considered merely with reference to the temporal interests of mankind, are in the highest degree pernicious." "But for our interference," he wrote, "human victims would still be offered to the Ganges, and the widow still laid on the pile with the corpse of her husband and burned alive by her children." Hence to condone Brahminical idolatry and to discountenance Christianity is "to commit high treason against humanity and civilization."

The remedy? English education. For "Every young Brahmin...", he wrote, "who learns geography in our colleges, learns to smile at the Hindoo mythology." He revelled in the effects which were already apparent. Writing to his father, he reported:

> Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully. We find it difficult, — indeed, in some places impossible, — to provide instruction for all who want it. At the single town of Hoogly fourteen hundred boys are learning English. The effect of this education on the

> Hindoos is prodigious. No Hindoo, who has received an English education, ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. Some continue to profess it as a matter of policy; but many profess themselves pure Deists, and some embrace Christianity. It is my firm belief that, if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence. And this will be effected without any effort to proselytise; without the smallest interference with religious liberty; merely by the natural operation of knowledge and reflection. I heartily rejoice in the prospect.

And this is Macaulay whose religious feelings, his biographer reports him as saying, were not "ardent... even to enthusiasm," who, the biographer quotes an interlocutor who met him noting, "seemed to me not to have the slightest taint of fanaticism."[1]

*The lesser known tract*

Macaulay's *Minute* was drafted in regard to the controversy between the "Orientalists" — those who urged that the natives be instructed at first through their own languages and using in the first instance books which were in use and were revered in the country — and those who urged that they be taught English and through that western values and learning. But should they be taught at all? Would it not be safer to leave them to wallow in ignorance and ritual and superstition? Would education not ignite ideas of freedom and the

[1] For the citations, see John Clive, *Macaulay, The Shaping of the Historian*, 1973, Vintage, 1975, pp. 411-3, from which the last few examples are taken.

rest? These were the questions that a young civil servant — Charles Edward Trevelyan — addressed in a tract, *On the Education of the People of India*, which received great notice at the time, though it is insufficiently recalled today. On all counts he was a formidable figure, and his tract proved to be one of the most influential written at the time.

Born in 1807, Trevelyan landed in Bombay when he was just about 20 to work for the East India Company. From Bombay he made his way on horse to Madras and thence by boat to Calcutta. By 1827 he was in Delhi, an assistant to the Resident, Sir Edward Colebrooke, a till-then distinguished India-hand who had been in the service of the East India Company for almost half a century. Young Trevelyan soon discovered that Colebrooke, his wife and son were raking in money illegally. He exposed them to the Government in Calcutta. Colebrooke and his colleagues tried everything to break him, to get rid of him. He was ostracised by the entire British community. But he stood his ground. An official investigation upheld his charges. Colebrooke was dismissed.

Trevelyan was soon appointed as the British political agent at Kotah and Bundi. Within two years he was in Calcutta and by 1833, barely 26, he had been appointed Secretary of the General Committee of Public Instruction. It is from this post that he vigorously prepared the ground for the position which Macaulay — whose sister, Hannah, he had married — so decisively articulated in the *Minute*. Trevelyan's career rivets one to this day: back in England he became one of the most influential civil servants — he reorganised the Treasury, he had a major role in organising the civil service; he returned to India as Governor of the Madras Presidency, only to be recalled to London as a consequence of a quarrel he picked up with the Finance Member of the Governor General's Council in Calcutta; but just

two years later he was back in Calcutta, this time himself the Finance Member of the Governor General's Council ! Throughout his long career he remained uncompromising and principled — traits that often got him in trouble. And there was another trait which got him in trouble even oftener, a trait that would endear him to every pressman: he never could resist the temptation of airing his views in the press ![2]

I mention these particulars as they direct us to an important point: the presuppositions of these persons were wrong, their objectives were such as to be wholly repugnant to us, but these were no small, snivelling pen-pushers. They were men of character, of formidable intellects, they were British patriots to the core, they were rulers. They were acting out the interest of their country and their religion. To blame them would be to miss the point all together.

But to forget what lay at the back of their policies would be suicidal. And we never do pay attention to their presuppositions and their objectives — testimony no doubt to the thoroughness with which the job they commenced came to be done.

In any event, the question was: why not leave the Indians ignorant, would leaving them to wallow in their superstitions not be the way to secure the British Empire? The young Trevelyan's answer — he was barely 31 when he wrote it — was so well put from the point of view of British interest, that it is best to read it at some length. Here are portions from Chapter VII of the tract, on "The Political Tendency of the different Systems of Education in use in India." Do read them.

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[1] For an affectionate and succinct account by the grandson of his brother, see Humphrey Trevelyan, *The India We Left*, Macmillan, London, 1972, pp. 25-106.

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### *The Political Tendency of the different Systems of Education in use in India*

There can be no dispute as to what our duty as the rulers of India requires us to do. But it has been said, and may be said again, that whatever our duty may be, it is not our policy to enlighten the natives of India; that the sooner they grow to man's estate, the sooner they will be able to do without us; and that by giving them knowledge, we are giving them power, of which they will make the first use against ourselves.

*Charles Trevelyan*

If our interest and our duty were really opposed to each other, every good man, every honest Englishman, would know which to prefer. Our national experience has given us too deep a sense of the true ends of government, to allow us to think of carrying on the administration of India except for the benefit of the people of India. A nation which made so great a sacrifice to redeem a few hundred thousand Negroes from slavery, would shudder at the idea of keeping a hundred millions of Indians in the bondage of ignorance, with all its frightful consequences, by means of a political system supported by the revenue taken from the Indians themselves. Whether we govern India ten or a thousand years, we will do our duty by it: we will look, not to the probable duration of our trust, but to the satisfactory discharge of it, so long as it shall please God to continue it to us. Happily, however, we are not on this occasion called upon to make any effort of disinterested magnanimity. Interest and duty are never really separated in the affairs of nations, any more than they are in those of individuals; and in this case they are indissolubly united, as a very slight examination will suffice to show.

The Arabian or Mahommedan system is based on the exercise of power and the indulgence of passion. Pride,

ambition, the love of rule, and of sensual enjoyment, are called in to the aid of religion. The earth is the inheritance of the Faithful: all besides are infidel usurpers, with whom no measures are to be kept, except what policy may require. Universal dominion belongs to the Mahommedans by Divine Right. Their religion obliges them to establish their predominance by the sword; and those who refuse to conform are to be kept in a state of slavish-subjection. The Hindu system, although less fierce and aggressive than the Mahommedan, is still more exclusive: all who are not Hindus are impure outcasts, fit only for the most degraded employments; and, of course, utterly disqualified for the duties of government, which are reserved for the military, under the guidance of the priestly caste. Such is the political tendency of the Arabic and Sanskrit systems of learning. Happily for us, these principles exist in their full force only in books written in difficult languages, and in the minds of a few learned men; and they are very faintly reflected in the feelings and opinions of the body of the people. But what will be thought of that plan of national education which would revive them and make them popular; would be perpetually reminding the Mahommedans that we are infidel usurpers of some of the fairest realms of the Faithful, and the Hindus, that we are unclean beasts, with whom it is a sin and a shame to have any friendly intercourse. Our bitterest enemies could not desire more than that we should propagate systems of learning which excite the strongest feelings of human nature against ourselves.

*Charles Trevelyan*

The spirit of English literature, on the other hand, cannot but be favourable to the English connection. Familiarly acquainted with us by means of our literature, the Indian youth almost cease to regard us as foreigners. They speak of our great men with the same enthusiasm as we do. Educated in

the same way, interested in the same objects, engaged in the same pursuits with ourselves, they become more English than Hindu, just as the Roman provincials became more Romans than Gauls or Italians. What is it that makes us what we are, except living and conversing with English people, and imbibing English thoughts and habits of mind? They do so too: they daily converse with the best and wisest Englishmen through the medium of their works; and form, perhaps, a higher idea of our nation than if their intercourse with it were of a more personal kind. Admitted behind the scenes, they become acquainted with the principles which guide our proceedings; they see how sincerely we study the benefit of India in the measures of our administration; and from violent opponents, or sullen conformists, they are converted into zealous and intelligent co-operators with us. They learn to make a proper use of the freedom of discussion which exists under our government, by observing how we use it ourselves; and they cease to think of violent remedies, because they are convinced that there is no indisposition on our part to satisfy every real want of the country. Dishonest and bad rulers alone derive any advantage from the ignorance of their subjects. As long as we study the benefit of India in our measures, the confidence and affection of the people will increase in proportion to their knowledge of us.

*Charles Trevelyan*

But this is not all. There is a principle in human nature which impels all mankind to aim at improving their condition; every individual has his plan of happiness; every community has its ideas of securing the national honour and prosperity. This powerful and universal principle, in some shape or other, is in a state of constant activity; and if it be not enlisted on our side, it must be arrayed against us. As long as the natives are left to brood over their former inde-

pendence, their sole specific for improving their condition is, the immediate and total expulsion of the English. A native patriot of the old school has no notion of anything beyond this; his attention has never been called to any other mode of restoring the dignity and prosperity of his country. It is only by the infusion of European ideas, that a new direction can be given to the national views. The young men, brought up at our seminaries, turn with contempt from the barbarous despotisms under which their ancestors groaned, to the prospect of improving their national institutions on the English model. Instead of regarding us with dislike, they court our society, and look upon us as their natural protectors and benefactors; the summit of their ambition is, to resemble us; and, under our auspices, they hope to elevate the character of their countrymen, and to prepare them by gradual steps for the enjoyment of a well-regulated and therefore a secure and a happy independence. So far from having the idea of driving the English into the sea uppermost in their minds, they have no notion of any improvement but such as rivets their connection with the English, and makes them dependent on English protection and instruction. In the re-establishment of the old native governments they see only the destruction of their most cherished hopes, and a state of great personal insecurity for themselves.

*Charles Trevelyan*

The existing connection between two such distant countries as England and India, cannot, in the nature of things, be permanent; no effort of policy can prevent the natives from ultimately regaining their independence. But there are two ways of arriving at this point. One of these is, through the medium of revolution; the other, through that of reform. In one, the forward movement is sudden and violent; in the other, it is gradual and peaceable. One must end in a complete alienation of mind and separation of interests between

ourselves and the natives; the other in a permanent alliance, founded on mutual benefit and good-will.

The only means at our disposal for preventing the one and securing the other class of results is, to set the natives on a process of European improvement, to which they are already sufficiently inclined. They will then cease to desire and aim at independence on the old Indian footing. A sudden change will then be impossible; and a long continuance of our present connection with India will even be assured to us. A Mahratta or Mahommedan despotism might be re-established in a month; but a century would scarcely suffice to prepare the people for self-government on the European model. The political education of a nation must be a work of time; and while it is in progress, we shall be as safe as it will be possible for us to be. The natives will not rise against us, because we shall stoop to raise them; there will be no re-action, because there will be no pressure; the national activity will be fully and harmlessly employed in acquiring and diffusing European knowledge, and in naturalising European institutions. The educated classes, knowing that the elevation of their country on these principles can only be worked out under our protection, will naturally cling to us. They even now do so. There is no class of our subjects to whom we are so thoroughly necessary as those whose opinions have been cast in the English mould; they are spoiled for a purely native regime; they have everything to fear from the premature establishment of a native government; their education would mark them out for persecution; the feelings of independence, the literary and scientific pursuits, the plans of improvement in which they indulged under our government, must be exchanged for the servility and prostration of mind which characterise an Asiatic court. This class is at present a small

*Charles Trevelyan*

minority, but it is continually receiving accessions from the youth who are brought up at the different English seminaries. It will in time become the majority; and it will then be necessary to modify the political institutions to suit the increased intelligence of the people, and their capacity for self-government.

*Charles Trevelyan*

The change will thus be peaceably and gradually effected; there will be no struggle, no mutual exasperation; the natives will have independence, after first learning how to make a good use of it; we shall exchange profitable subjects for still more profitable allies. The present administrative connection benefits families, but a strict commercial union between the first manufacturing and the first producing country in the world, would be a solid foundation of strength and prosperity to our whole nation. If this course be adopted, there will, properly speaking, be no separation. A precarious and temporary relation will almost imperceptibly pass into another far more durable and beneficial. Trained by us to happiness and independence, and endowed with our learning and our political institutions, India will remain the proudest monument of British benevolence; and we shall long continue to reap, in the affectionate attachment of the people, and in a great commercial intercourse with their splendid country, the fruit of that liberal and enlightened policy which suggested to us this line of contact.

In following this course we should be trying no new experiment. The Romans at once civilized the nations of Europe, and attached them to their rule by Romanising them; or, in other words, by educating them in the Roman literature and arts, and teaching them to emulate their conquerors instead of opposing them. Acquisitions made by superiority in war, were consolidated by superiority in the arts of peace;

and the remembrance of the original violence was lost in that of the benefits which resulted from it. The provincials of Italy, Spain, Africa, and Gaul, having no ambition except to imitate the Romans, and to share their privileges with them, remained to the last faithful subjects of the empire; and the union was at last dissolved, not by internal revolt, but by the shock of external violence, which involved conquerors and conquered in one common overthrow. The Indians will, I hope, soon stand in the same position towards us in which we once stood towards the Romans. Tacitus informs us, that it was the policy of Julius Agricola to instruct the sons of the leading men among the Britons in the literature and science of Rome, and to give them a taste for the refinements of Roman civilization. We all know how well this plan answered. From being obstinate enemies, the Britons soon became attached and confiding friends; and they made more strenuous efforts to retain the Romans, than their ancestors had done to resist their invasion. It will be a shame to us if, with our greatly superior advantages, we also do not make our premature departure be dreaded as a calamity. It must not be said in after ages, that "the groans of the Britons" were elicited by the breaking up of the Roman empire; and the groans of the Indians by the continued existence of the British.

*Charles Trevelyan*

We may also take a lesson from the Mahommedans whose conquests have been so extensive and so permanent. From the Indian Archipelago to Portugal, Arabic was established as the language of religion, of literature, and of law; the vernacular tongues were saturated with it; and the youth of the conquered countries soon began to vie with their first instructors in every branch of Mahommedan learning. A polite education was understood to mean a Mahommedan education; and the most cultivated and active minds were

everywhere engaged on the side of the Mahommedan system. The emperor Akbar followed up this policy in India. Arabicised Persian was adopted as the language of his dynasty; and the direction thereby given to the national sympathies and ideas greatly contributed to produce that feeling of veneration for the family which has long survived the loss of its power. This feeling, which in Europe would be called loyalty, is common to those who have been brought up in the old learning, but is very rarely found in connection with an English education. The policy of our predecessors, although seldom worthy of imitation, was both very sound and very successful in this respect. If we adopt the same policy, it will be more beneficial to the natives in proportion as English contains a greater fund of true knowledge than Arabic and Persian; and it will be more beneficial to us in proportion as the natives will study English more zealously and extensively than they did Arabic and Persian, and will be more completely changed by it in feeling and opinion.

*Charles Trevelyan*

These views were not worked out by reflection, but were forced on me by actual observation and experience. I passed some years in parts of India, where, owing to the comparative novelty of our rule and to the absence of any attempt to alter the current of native feeling, the national habits of thinking remained unchanged. There, high and low, rich and poor, had only one idea of improving their political condition. The upper classes lived upon the prospect of regaining their former pre-eminence; and the lower, upon that of having the avenues to wealth and distinction re-opened to them by the re-establishment of a native government. Even sensible and comparatively well affected natives had no notion that there was any remedy for the existing depressed state of their nation except the sudden and absolute expulsion of the

English. After that, I resided for some years in Bengal, and there I found quite another set of ideas prevalent among the educated natives. Instead of thinking of cutting the throats of the English, they were aspiring to sit with them on the grand jury or on the bench of magistrates. Instead of speculating on Punjab or Nepaulese politics, they were discussing the advantages of printing and free discussion, in oratorical English speeches, at debating societies which they had established among themselves. The most sanguine dimly looked forward in the distant future to the establishment of a national representative assembly as the consummation of their hopes — all of them being fully sensible that these plans of improvement could only be worked out with the aid and protection of the British Government by the gradual improvement of their countrymen in knowledge and morality; and that the re-establishment of a Mahommedan or any other native regime would at once render all such views impracticable and ridiculous. No doubt, both these schemes of national improvement suppose the termination of the English rule; but while that event is the beginning of one, it is only the conclusion of the other. In one, the sudden and violent overthrow of our government is a necessary preliminary; in the other, a long continuance of our administration, and the gradual withdrawal of it as the people become fit to govern themselves, are equally indispensable.

*Charles Trevelyan*

Our native army is justly regarded as the pillar of our Indian empire; and no plan of benefiting either the natives or ourselves can be worth anything which does not rest on the supposition that this pillar will remain unbroken. It is therefore of importance to inquire how this essential element of power is likely to be affected by the course of policy which has been described. The Indian army is made up of two

entirely distinct parts; the English officers, and the native officers and men. The former will, under any circumstances, stand firm to their national interests; the latter will be animated by the feelings of the class of society from which they are drawn, except so far as those feelings may be modified by professional interests and habits. The native officers rise from the ranks; and the ranks are recruited from the labouring class, which is the last that will be affected by any system of national education. Not one in five hundred of the boys who are instructed in the Zillah seminaries, will enlist in the army. If the sepoys are educated anywhere, it must be in the village schools; and the organisation of those schools will be the concluding measure of the series. The instruction given to the labouring class can never be more than merely elementary. They have not leisure for more. But, such as it is, they will be indebted for it to us and as it will form part of a system established and superintended by ourselves, we shall take care that it is of a kind calculated to inspire feelings of attachment to the British connexion. After this the young men who enlist in the army will become imbued with the military spirit, and moulded by the habits of military obedience. I leave to others to judge whether this training is calculated to make better and more attached, or worse and more disaffected, soldiers than the state of entire neglect, as regards their moral and intellectual improvement, in which the whole class are at present left. I never heard that the education given in the national schools unfitted the common people of England for the ranks of the army; although the inducements to honourable and faithful service, which are open to them after they enter the army, are much inferior to those which are held out to our sepoys.

*Charles Trevelyan*

Religious instruction forms no part of the object of the

Government seminaries. It would be impossible for the State to interfere at all with native education on any other condition; and this is now so well understood, that religious jealousy offers no obstruction to our success. The general favour with which English education is regarded, and the multitudes who flock to our schools, prove this to be the case. The Brahmins, it is true, ruled supreme over the old system. It was moulded for the express purpose of enabling them to hold the minds of men in thraldom; and ages had fixed the stamp of solidity upon it. Upon this ground they were unassailable. But popular education, through the medium of the English language, is an entirely new element, with which they are incapable of dealing. It did not enter into the calculation of the founders of their system; and they have no machinery to oppose to it. Although they have been priest-ridden for ages the people of India are, for all purposes of improvement, a new, and more than a new, people. Their appetite for knowledge has been whetted by their long-compelled fast; and aware of the superiority of the new learning, they devour it more greedily than they ever would have done Sanskrit lore, even if that lore had not been withheld from them: they bring to the task, vacant minds and excited curiosity, absence of prejudice, and an inextinguishable thirst for information. They cannot return under the dominion of the Brahmins. The spell has been for ever broken. Hinduism is not a religion which will bear examination. It is so entirely destitute of any thing like evidence, and is identified with so many gross immoralities and physical absurdities, that it gives way at once before the light of European science. Mahommedanism is made of tougher materials; yet, even a Mahommedan youth who has received an English education is a very different person from one who has been taught according to the perfect manner of the law

*Charles Trevelyan*

of his fathers. As this change advances, India will become quite another country: nothing more will be heard of excitable religious feelings: priestcraft will no longer be able to work by ignorance: knowledge and power will pass from a dominant caste to the people themselves; the whole nation will co-operate with us in reforming institutions, the possibility of altering which could never have been contemplated if events had taken any other course; and many causes will concur to introduce a more wholesome state of morals, which, of all the changes that can take place, is the one in which the public welfare is most concerned.

*Charles Trevelyan*

There has been a time at which each of the other branches of the public service has particularly commanded attention. The commercial, the political, the judicial, the revenue departments, have in turn been the subject of special consideration; and decisive steps have been taken to put them on a satisfactory footing. My object will be sufficiently attained if I succeed in producing a conviction that the time has arrived for taking up the question of public instruction in the same spirit, and with the same determination to employ whatever means may be requisite for accomplishing the object in view. The absence of any sensible proof that increased taxation is attended with any proportionate benefit to India, has long been extremely disheartening both to the natives and to the European public officers serving in that country. The entire abolition of the transit duties, and the establishment of an adequate system of public instruction, would furnish this proof, and would excite the warmest gratitude of every body who from any cause feels interested in the welfare of India. The interest of a single million sterling, in addition to what is already expended, would be sufficient to answer every present purpose as far as education is con-

cerned. Even on the narrowest view of national interest, a million could not be better invested. It would ensure the moral and intellectual emancipation of the people of India, and would render them at once attached to our rule and worthy of our alliance.

*Charles Trevelyan*

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The clear object: to perpetuate British rule into the indefinite future. The definite instrument: to instruct the natives in western learning, to inculcate in them western values so that they come to perceive their own interest in the perpetuation of British rule. For this approach to work, the clear imperative: the Government should remain neutral between religions. But the confidence that this will be enough, even from a strictly religious point of view, as Hinduism is not a religion which will bear examination — "It is so entirely destitute of any thing like evidence, and is identified with so many gross immoralities and physical absurdities, that it gives way at once before the light of European science." John Clive recalls how Trevelyan assured Lord Bentinck that English education shall sound the death knell of the idolatrous religions not only of India, but of all Asia. Hinduism is "not a religion which will bear examination," he said. "It is sufficient to prove," he told the House of Commons Select Committee, "that the world does not rest on the back of the tortoise, or is not composed of concentric circles of wine and cake and milk, and so forth, and their religion is gone." The natives were already in a "middle state" of enlightened heathenism. But they could not remain in that state. They needed a religion, and were bound to come over to Christianity.[3]

The great confluence: of duty and interest, of the interests

[3] For the examples in the last few lines, see John Clive, *op cit*, p. 410.

of Empire and the interests of the Church. His subsequent experience in India as well as in British government in England fortified Trevelyan in these views — as is evident from the fact that he submitted this chapter in evidence to the British Parliament's Select Committee on Indian Territories 15 years later — in May 1853.

On 31 October 1881 — he was 74 by now — Sir Charles Trevelyan addressed the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle-on-Tyne. The address contrasts Islam, Buddhism and in particular Hinduism with Christianity. But it is not for that contrasting that it is noteworthy — Trevelyan as will be evident was no student of religions and philosophies. For us the address is of interest as it documents vividly the governing presuppositions of the rulers: their commitment to Christianity being no less than their commitment to the Empire — "...as the Christian religion is the only one capable of correcting the disorders caused by the passions of mankind, and of gradually leading on the world to a state of perfection, it must be of divine origin, and we are bound to promote its universal diffusion in obedience to its founder, Jesus Christ. If this is true as a general proposition, we are under a special obligation to our magnificent Indian Empire, and the facilities for the task are in proportion to the obligation;" their special loathing in this context for Hinduism; their premise, their hope, indeed their expectation that Christianity would soon prevail; their calculation that it was enough for Government to spread western lore and learning for Hinduism to be destroyed — "The grammar and spelling-book suffice to destroy the Hindu religion"; their assessment that the work of Government and of the Church is proceeding well apace, and that soon "the Christian locomotive (will be) placed on the Indian rail"; their faith in this context in the Brahmo Samaj — "...a vast secession from Hinduism, which has

already advanced more than halfway to Christianity." Once again, please do read the address.

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*Sir Charles Trevelyan on Christianity and other religions*

*Charles Trevelyan*

The vital question of the divine origin of Christianity is approached from different sides, according to each person's experience and turn of mind. Being myself of a practical disposition, and having had unusual opportunities of seeing the principal religions of the world in their ordinary daily operation, I have naturally looked to the test of results. My family motto is, "Time trieth Truth." The Founder of our religion himself has told us to judge of a tree by its fruits, "for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes."

We have had nearly nineteen hundred years experience of Christianity, and what has been the result? We all know what the ideal of Christianity is — how it would be if the Christian religion were worked out to its ulterior consequences. Earth would become paradise. Wars would cease. The expense of the army, navy, and police would be saved. Even the poor-rate would disappear before the progress of sobriety, industry, and wise enlightened charity. A real millennium, anticipating the perfection of the life to come, would be realised in the present state of existence. Towards this state of things Christendom has been continually advancing. It is characteristic of the Christian nations, and of the Christian nations only, that, notwithstanding partial relapses, there has been an uninterrupted progress towards perfection. The advance has been proportioned to the degree in which different nations have adhered to the Christian standard, and, thank God, it has been greatest in our

own country and our own time, with every prospect of further indefinite improvement.

Let us now turn to other religions. Mahommedanism is entitled to the next place by its grand vindication of the unity of the Godhead; but what would the world become if Mahommedanism were carried out to its ulterior results? The entire female sex would have no higher destiny than to be objects of pleasure to the males. A large proportion even of the males (many of them mutilated and degraded to meet the special exigencies of Mahommedan domestic arrangements) would be slaves to the remainder; for, as all who have watched the attempt to abolish slavery in Turkey and Egypt must have observed, the Mahommedan social system is based upon slavery; and all non-Mahommedan people would be born ready saddled and bridled to be mounted by True Believers coming into the world ready booted and spurred. All this is seen daily enacted in the countries which are so unfortunate as to be still under Mahommedan rule. Instead of the crowning Christian graces of humility and charity, pride, lust, and oppression would universally prevail.

*Charles Trevelyan*

The experience we have had of Mahommedanism during nearly thirteen hundred years amounts quite to a Baconian induction. We know exactly what it can, and cannot, do for the world. It rapidly raises Fetish worshipers, and other degraded races, to a low standard of civilisation, beyond which they make no advance; but, on the contrary, immediately begin to deteriorate. This religion has had too much credit given to it for the Bagdad Caliphate, the Moorish regime in Spain, and the Indian Moghul dynasty. If the well-being of the body of the people be accepted as a test, these epochs will not bear the most superficial examination. Bernier, for instance, tells us that, at the most palmy period of the

Moghul dynasty, the Delhi nobles kept heavy whips hung over their gates ready to be used when any of the commonalty happened to offend them. At best these periods of Mahommedan glory were partial episodes, faint flickers of a flame which has long since subsided upon its embers. The moral power required to secure steady advancement was entirely wanting. The active principle of this religion is the "great sword" given to the Red Horseman in the Revelation. It is not a religion of "divine Philosophy", depending upon reasonable argument and persuasion, but is based upon human passion.

*Charles Trevelyan*

Next in order comes Buddhism. Many of its precepts are excellent, and in its benevolent aspirations it comes nearer than any other false religion to the spirit of Christianity. What it wants is the motive furnished to Christians by the sacrifice of Christ, and the "hope full of immortality," which Christianity alone has revealed. The views of Buddhism about the world to come are of the obscurest and most degrading kind — endless transmigrations, in a descending or ascending scale, ending at best in a possible Nirvana, or unconscious absorption into the Deity. If we could conceive a set of quietists, acting merely in obedience to a set of moral rules, looking back to no salvation wrought for them, and looking forward only to the dismalest prospect in the life to come, we might form some idea of what mankind would be if they were conformed to a universal Buddhism.

Hinduism is the only remaining great system of idolatry; and, of all the religions which mankind have invented for themselves, it has gone furthest in deifying human vice and holding out its impersonations as objects of imitation and worship. From murder to petty larceny, every crime has its patron in the Hindu Pantheon. The pickpocket quotes Krishna pilfering the milkmaids; the swindler adores Gunesh;

the prostitute glories in her profession, and officiates at the service of all the gods, although she is a special devotee of Kami, the Hindu Venus. All these, however, are trifles compared with the abominations behind. Many years ago some experienced Government officers and devoted missionaries at Calcutta formed an association for the purpose of exposing and discouraging cruel and demoralising practices; but it was found that these customs were so firmly rooted in the religious faith of the natives, that a united attack in front was admitted to be inexpedient.

*Charles Trevelyan*

It would serve no good purpose to enter upon all these lamentable results of Hinduism; but as, by the admission of every nation in every age, nothing is more precious than human life, let us test this religion by the regard in which human life is held by it. The practice of human sacrifices in India is more ancient than Hinduism. The Meriah sacrifices, carried on by the aboriginal population in the hill districts of Cuttack, are a case in point. Young children were purchased or stolen and fattened in pens until their turn came to be cut into small pieces, which were scattered over the fields in order to secure good crops. But human sacrifice was adopted at a very early period into the Hindu religion under the patronage of a goddess whose worship occupies a large space in it. She is known as Devi, Bawani, Durga, Kali — "the goddess", "the inspirer of fear", "the dreadful one", "the black goddess", — and her image is represented in the act of devouring a human being, and holding the quivering bodies of others in her numerous hands. An example of human sacrifice regularly performed will be found (later), but instances are continually cropping up of sons decapitated by their fathers before the image of the goddess, children thrown to the alligators in her name, and so forth, besides the wholesale infanticide and exposure of parents on the banks of the

Ganges, and other cruel practices, which are indirectly sanctioned by her. But all this is respectable, because it may be mainly prompted by disinterested religious motives, compared with Thuggee, which was a highly organised confederacy, extending over the whole of India, for the purpose of carrying on, under the sanction of religion, a wholesale system of murder for purposes of gain. The novices were initiated by religious rites. They were guided in the exercise of their profession by supposed revelations of the will of their divine patroness communicated from hour to hour by means of omens, so that they held it to be a sin not to strangle travelers who came in their way when the omens were favourable. They sacrificed to Bawani after every murder, and they regularly offered a tithe of their plunder at her shrine.

*Charles Trevelyan*

It is a common remark that dogma and doctrine are nothing, and practice everything; but here we have decisive evidence to the contrary. More than once, Thugs who had been admitted as approvers remonstrated with the English superintendent in language of this sort: "You ought not to have hung such or such a notorious Thug. He was such a good religious man; such an affectionate father or brother; so exemplary in all the relations of life," and so forth. According to the faith held by them, these Thugs were as religious as John Wesley or Mr. Wilberforce. The only difference was that Wesley and Wilberforce held the true, while the Thugs held a false, doctrine. After this, let no man say that sound doctrine is of no importance.

You now see what the world would become if Hinduism generally prevailed. The wonder is how human society can subsist at all under such a religion. The truth is, that human nature is better than Hinduism, and the kind and affectionate dispositions implanted in us by God cannot be entirely ef-

faced even by the worst of false religions. Children have to be trained to the practice of Thuggee by a gradual process, and great care is taken not to shock their feelings by too sudden an introduction to scenes of murder, lamentable incidents having resulted from the breach of this rule. Society is also held together by human laws and obvious considerations of personal interest. The Thugs never molested Europeans, for they knew that if they touched a hair of their head they would never hear the last of it. Outside their own profession the Thugs cultivated the goodwill of everybody connected with them, and were generally regarded as more than usually amiable, respectable, and intelligent members of the community. When I was attached to the Delhi Residency, we were informed by the Thuggee Department that one of our messengers, named Feringea, had been a noted Thug leader, having employed his annual leave of absence in making an expedition as a member of the fraternity. Upon this, I asked the jemmadar, or office-keeper, what sort of a man Feringea was, to which he replied that he had been a first-rate messenger, and had never given any cause of complaint. "But were you aware that he was a Thug leader?" Upon this the office-keeper gave a significant shrug, and said, "Well, sir, we have heard of the use he made of his holiday." Such is Hindu morality!

*Charles Trevelyan*

The practical conclusion to be deduced from these premises is, that, as the Christian religion is the only one capable of correcting the disorders caused by the passions of mankind, and of gradually leading on the world to a state of perfection, it must be of divine origin, and we are bound to promote its universal diffusion in obedience to its founder, Jesus Christ. If this is true as a general proposition, we are under a special obligation to our magnificent Indian Empire, and the facilities for the task are in proportion to the obliga-

tion. The founders of the Hindu system flattered themselves that they had constructed an inexpugnable system, but the arrangements on which they chiefly relied have proved their greatest cause of weakness. They took away the key of knowledge by confining literature and science to the sacred Sanskrit language, and permitting none but Brahmans to learn it. But their flank has been completely turned by the avidity with which natives of every caste now cultivate the language of their rulers, and their own vernacular languages in connection with it. The Brahmans bound up their legal and scientific system with their religion, and now it is all breaking up together, for the full light of European science has been turned upon it, and the notion cannot for a moment be entertained that the world is supported on the back of a tortoise, or that an eclipse is caused by a monstrous dragon devouring the sun or moon.

*Charles Trevelyan*

The grammar and spelling-book suffice to destroy the Hindu religion. A generation is growing up which repudiates idols. A young Hindu, who had received a liberal English education, was forced by his family to attend the shrine of Kali, upon which he took off his cap to "Madam Kali," made her a low bow, and "hoped her ladyship was well." Nevertheless, the missionaries have a most important part to perform. The schoolmaster may break down the barrier, but the missionary must march in and occupy the citadel. The natives are craving for knowledge; and, after the example of Dr. Duff, the missionaries should seize the opportunity and give them Christian knowledge. Although it has heretofore been miserably misdirected, the Hindus are strongly imbued with the religious sentiment (the extravagant lengths they have gone in false religion would alone prove this), and they cannot long do without the consolations and hopes of religion.

As they cannot go back to Mahommedanism, they must go forward to that religion which is daily becoming more associated in their minds with peace, civil order, justice, national prosperity. In this way the Government helps. The railways help. Every Englishmen who in any way benefits India helps.

*Charles Trevelyan*

The evangelisation of India must not be measured by the annual number of declared conversions. India is absorbing Christian knowledge and Christian feeling at every pore. The mere fact that evenhanded justice is administered without any imputation of interested motives, and that, whatever mistakes we make, we try to do our duty to India, so contrary to all experience of former rulers, has a great educational effect, the influence of which is seen in the growth of a body of native public officers who can be trusted in a way they never were before. An unusually difficult and responsible administrative operation, of the nature of our tithe commutation, had to be executed in the Tanjore district, and all my advisers, European and native, agreed in recommending a native officer, Ramaya Ayankar, as the fittest person to be entrusted with it. He was so entrusted, and he executed it to admiration without the slightest imputation on his personal integrity. It is a guarantee of further progress in this direction that the observance of the seventh day's rest has commenced. At Madras, in particular, it is delightful to see family parties of natives walking about dressed in their Sunday-best. The full religious significance of the day has not yet occurred to them, but they have accepted it as a day of rest and social recreation.

Although India has not yet become Christian, a higher standard of morality has been established, and the spirit of Christianity is becoming diffused throughout native society. Christian knowledge is spreading in every direction in advance of openly professed conversions, and it has become a

common thing to meet with natives who know more of the Bible than most Christians. Multitudes, quite outside the missionary communities, have accepted Christianity in principle. This is to a great extent avowed. No doubt you have heard of Ram Mohan Rai, Dwarkanath Thakur, and Keshab Chandar Sen, the leaders of a vast secession from Hinduism, which has already advanced more than halfway to Christianity; and there are greater multitudes behind who have made no profession, but are feeling their way towards a religion which they see is full of power and blessing. The reproach of Christianity is fast disappearing. When I first went to India no respectable Hindu or Mahommedan would be seen in company with a Christian convert. They would not enter the same ferry-boat with them, and would break or scour a vessel they had touched. Now, however, Christian converts hold their own in native society. They are kept in countenance by the much larger numbers who, without professing Christianity, have thrown off Hinduism. They take an active part in municipal and general administration, getting their full share of public appointments. The missionary schools, also, are crowded, and the missionaries themselves are in great request as tutors to the children of native chiefs.

*Charles Trevelyan*

My own opinion is, that the conversion of India to Christianity will take place in a different way from that generally anticipated. When the fullness of time has come, and the absorption of Christian truth has gone far enough, native public opinion will declare itself, and "a nation will be born in a day." It will be something like the construction of a railway. The first sod is cut. The ballast is heaped to make the embankment. The rails are laid upon the embankment. Still, although greatly advanced, it cannot be said to be a railway until the locomotive has been placed on the rail, and the fire

has been lighted to get up the steam. Many of those who fill this room will, I hope, see the Christian locomotive placed on the Indian rail.[4]

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Notice that these were the premises, the objectives, the hopes of a man who quarrelled with his colleagues to educate Indians, who roundly denounced the indigo planters — the very ones against whom Gandhiji was to launch the Champaran Satyagraha half a century later, who looked forward to the day when Indians would be inducted into the provincial councils, to the day when they would hold commissioned ranks in the army.

*Reinforcing each other*

But it was not just that the civil servants and the missionaries shared an objective, that they shared presuppositions. They reinforced each other's work, and did so consciously, certain that in helping the other they were ensuring the fulfillment of what was their own primary responsibility.

Sir Richard Temple started his Indian career in the North-West Frontier Province. He served in Allahabad, and Mathura, became the Commissioner at Lahore and the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces. "Municipalities, dispensaries, primary schools, district boards dripped from his pen," writes Philip Mason about Temple in *The Men Who Ruled India*. "He created, built, endowed, set up and vivified. He went everywhere and saw everything." "Two of the most important posts in the Government of India were Finance Member and Foreign Secretary," Mason writes.

[4] Charles Trevelyan, *Christianity and Hinduism Contrasted*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1882.

"Temple held both. The first post in the Political Department was Resident at Hyderabad. Temple held that. He held charge in succession of three Indian provinces, the Central Provinces, Bengal and Bombay."[5] In terms of offices held, in other words, Temple had a career in India even more distinguished than that of Sir Charles Trevelyan.

We encounter him in London in the early 1880s. Like so many senior civil servants, and so many of the academics we shall soon encounter, he is addressing missionary societies in England — eulogising the work they are doing in India and exhorting the public to contribute generously to the corpus of the Church.

The speech that follows is a representative one — he delivered this one to the Baptist Missionary Society in London in April 1883. That every Christian is in duty bound to spread the religion; that the heaviest responsibility in this regard has fallen upon the British — that it is for spreading the truth of Christianity that Providence has placed the Empire at the disposal of Britain; that Buddhism and Hinduism are dying and dead; that the tribals ought to be made the special focus of the exertions of the missionaries — "These aborigines by their mind and conscience offer a surface like clean paper, upon which the missionaries may make a mark," and that "if they (the tribals) are attached, as they rapidly may be, to Christianity, they will form a nucleus round which British power and influence may gather"; that the Government's system of education "aids wondrously in India in enlightening the people," that "It is leading men to look towards a religion of the monotheistic or theistic kind. It is inducing them to abjure the faith of their fathers if I may call it faith — or rather, the superstition of their fathers"; that

[5] Philip Mason, *The Men Who Ruled India*, Pan, London, 1987, pp. 227-8.

in addition to tribals, the education of women should be made a special target — "You cannot do better for the cause of Christianity than to continue these exertions on behalf of your Eastern sisters, in the full confidence that such educational enlightenment must be necessarily followed by the propagation of Christianity"; that "as patriotic people, you may be confident that the missions in India are doing a work which strengthens the imperial foundations of British power..." — it is all there. As is of course the great confidence in the movement which the missionaries, the civilian rulers and, as we shall see, the objective, impartial scholars were to applaud and patronize, namely the Brahmo Samaj.

As in the case of Sir Charles Trevelyan, do read the speech: that there was a division of labour, so to say, that the *dramatis personae* looked upon each other as comrades working towards a common goal — of converting India to Christianity and of securing the Empire for Britain — will become at once obvious.

Here then is the address Sir Richard Temple delivered to the Baptist Missionary Society in London in April 1883:

* * * * *

*Richard Temple*

I have felt it my peculiar duty to be present on this occasion because, as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, I have been specially acquainted with the Baptist missions in that province. The names of Carey, and Ward, and Marshman, which you read about, are to me living memories, and not only to me, but to thousands of my fellow-countrymen in the East, and what is more, to many millions of natives. These are memories of men who were the pioneers of civilisation and of humane refinement, the earliest propagators of Christian literature amongst the heathen. The results, indeed, of their work are

to be counted among the peaceful glories of England and a portion of that national heritage which is splendid in the highest sense of the term. Again, the Serampore College, which you see mentioned in the earlier publications of the Society, and in the later reports of this session, is to me a familiar sight — a place where I have distributed prizes, and where I have addressed meetings, not so great as this meeting, but still meetings inspired with equal enthusiasm. I have further thought it my duty to appear at the meeting, because of all the Protestant denominations in the East there is not one that according to its means, its numbers, and its opportunities, does more than the Baptist denomination. Of all the Protestant denominations the Free Church of Scotland is equalled by few and surpassed by none; but there is one by which it is equalled, and that is the Baptist denomination. In reference to your numbers and your wealth in this country, you, the Baptists, must indeed be possessed with a real zeal for religion — for consider not only your stations in Asia and in the East, but also in every part of the world. Look at the map of the world, and you will see your stations dotted from hemisphere to hemisphere, from one quarter of the globe to another, with little bright spots which are indeed the focuses of religious light. This meeting, too, which is so influentially and so numerously attended, is an earnest of the zeal which animates the community. I have seen many missionary meetings in all the chief cities of the north and west of England held on behalf of the Church of England and of other Protestant denominations, but nowhere have I seen a meeting which showed greater signs of real earnestness than the meeting which I have now the honour to address.

*Richard Temple*

Now, India presents the greatest of all fields for missionary exertion, greater even than that of China, for the reduc-

tion recently made in Chinese population statistics shows that India may be nearly equal to China as regards numbers of population. Then, in respect to our moral responsibilities before God and man, India is a country which of all others we are bound to enlighten with eternal truth. It is a happy thing that in India all the various Protestant denominations are acting together in brotherly sympathy. All their little difficulties about church organisation and the like are sunk before the heathen in the presence of the sovereign truths of the Gospel, and, happily, we may say that our spears are spiritual lances all pointed in one direction.

*Richard Temple*

I have just returned from a pilgrimage in Palestine; and, toiling laboriously, from sunrise to sunset, among the rocky paths of that mountainous region, I have seen the very landscape upon which the Divine eyes of the Saviour gazed; the very roads which His sacred feet trod, and the very rocks which re-echoed His words of more than mortal eloquence. And I ask you, my brother Christians, whether, of all the commands which He issued to us, there is any command more explicit than this, that we should preach the Gospel to all the world? If you believe in the Bible, if you are resolved to obey its ennobling dictates, then I ask you whether you are not bound, collectively and individually, to do your utmost to spread over the world, into its very utmost regions and among its most degraded tribes and classes, that light which emanated from Palestine? Look round and see whether there are any of the nations of the earth upon whom that responsibility more obviously and manifestly rests than upon the people of the United Kingdom. For we are proud of our Empire, of our fleets, mercantile and naval, which cover the seas. We not only administer, in India, a vast Empire directly, but over the Chinese Empire we exercise

almost commercial supremacy. We take Asiatic Turkey under our protection; we have now spread our benign sway over Egypt. We dispute with other Powers the valley of the Congo and the island of Madagascar. We have establishments on the Niger. We take the South African tribes — the Zulus, Basutos, Kaffirs, the Bechuanas of the Transvaal frontier — under our protection. We establish a new East India Company, so to speak, in the Island of Borneo, and now we discuss the prospect of taking over New Guinea. We are extended over various islands in the Pacific Ocean. We foster emigration from British India to the West Indian Islands and to Guiana. We are carrying communications right across North America from the Atlantic to the Pacific, which I have recently visited. We do these various things. You will have your own opinions, politically, as to whether all this is right or wrong, but it is done; and I ask you, do you believe that the Providence which permits us to do this, allows it merely for our national, our temporal, our secular aggrandisement? Can you believe it is permitted for any purpose but one — namely, the ultimate spread of the enlightenment of truth? And, as Christians, we believe that all ultimate truth must consist in religious truth. I press this argument not for the purpose of exciting imperial ideas in your mind, but merely for the purpose of enforcing upon your consciences the religious obligations under which you lie.

*Richard Temple*

Remember, too, that while we do these things, no doubt partly for our material benefit, or for the benefit, as we should say, of our labouring classes in this country — while we seek new fields for investment of capital, new markets for our manufactures, new communications for our commerce — we also, I am thankful to say, as a nation, remember that these imperial advantages carry with them imperial obligations. For certainly, wherever our influence extends, whether

it be secured peacefully or in a warlike manner, there is no doubt as to the ultimate result for the good government and the worldly prosperity of the tribes or nations that come under our charge. What is more, while the Government does its part in these matters, the Christian public never fails in doing its part — namely, in the spread of the truth which the Government, owing to its political obligations, is unable to diffuse. Therefore, looking abroad over our foreign interests throughout the world, you also look upon growing and increasing fields for our missionary exertions. Remember that every island, every valley, every continent which we occupy politically we are bound to enlighten morally and spiritually. It should be a matter of thankfulness to us that, whereas you so often see in human history the grandest qualities of humanity devoted to profitless wars and to various political combinations, of which there is either no result or a disappointing result, or in which among the actual results the harm preponderates over the good — yet in the British Empire you gladly perceive, from ordinary observation, that the results of our domination are material progress and civilisation, followed by moral and spiritual enlightenment. Therefore, it is a matter of thankfulness to us to find that the British qualities, the valour and genius, the statecraft and policy, are, under Providence, overruled for the good of the human race. And of that good, I venture to think, as a man of the world, as a politician, that one of the most potent instruments consists of those missionary exertions which we are here assembled to advocate and to encourage.

*Richard Temple*

Without troubling you at this moment with statistics of the wonderful progress of missionary operations in the world, I would refer you, first, to the decennial report that was published ten years ago in India, and now to the still

more interesting report recently published of the proceedings to the end of 1882. You will see from such reports a mighty progress, to be measured by hundreds of thousands of persons gathered into the fold of Christ. Progress such as that is found in India. I know that these reports are true, that entire efficiency is secured in India from one end to the other for the missionary cause; and further I infer, with the utmost confidence, that similar results are also secured for you in China, in the West Indies, in Africa, in Australasia, and in whatever region may be reached by your missionaries.

*Richard Temple*

Very often among Protestant denominations, doubts are cast upon the utility of missions, and many people, who ought to know better, come back from the East and bring disparaging reports. I am thankful to hear that these doubts do not exist among the Baptists, and that, at all events, our Baptist countrymen who come back from the East bring true reports. And these reports being true, I know myself that they must necessarily and inevitably be favourable. But may I remind you now of one or two points of a practical character which will confirm your faith and strengthen your resolve to do your duty? The religions in India — the old-established religions — are each of them waning and declining towards their ultimate fall. Buddhism is effete. Hinduism is gradually breaking up, like the clouds before the advancing sun. Muhammadanism, no doubt, will hold out much longer for this reason — that it has a much more rational foundation than either Buddhism or Hinduism. Now-a-days, the practice of Buddhism is a miserable superstition. The humane and comparatively sound doctrine of the original belief of Buddha has become utterly overlaid by the most wretched, the most degrading superstition. Hinduism is still the religion of the million, no doubt, but only of the uneducated million. It is no

longer the religion of the educated Hindu. It is no longer the religion of those who have either theoretical enlightenment or practical knowledge. It is being gradually dissipated, like the mist, before the science of the nineteenth century — that science which is being freely distributed amongst the people through the agency of the Government. Caste, no doubt, still holds its rule over the masses of India. But with some it no longer exists as a religious institution; with them it is purely a political institution. It binds them with iron fetters still, no doubt, but these fetters are secular rather than religious. But what is most important to you friends of missions, is this — that there is a large population of aborigines, a people who are outside caste, who do not belong to any old-established religions, who are not under the influence of bigoted and hereditary superstition. These aborigines by their mind and conscience offer a surface like clean paper, upon which the missionaries may make a mark. Although they are humble people, no doubt, still they are brave, resolute, faithful, and truth-telling people. If they are attached, as they rapidly may be, to Christianity, they will form a nucleus round which British power and influence may gather. Remember, too, that Hinduism, although it is dying, yet has force, and endeavours to proselytise amongst these people; and such tribes, if not converted to Christianity, may be perverted to Hinduism.

*Richard Temple*

The character of your missionaries is everything, permit me to assure you, everything that you could reasonably desire. Perhaps people will say, Where is the genius in an exceptional thing in all departments of public and of private life, as well as in missionary life; but in all probability the average of Protestant missionaries in India is improving year by year. I do not mean to say that there is greater zeal now than there was in the last generation. The piety of the present

may not exceed the piety of the past. One important thing, however, is gained nowadays, namely, the technical, the professional training for the missionary work. Every denomination has now training colleges for the missionaries, and not only that, but there are missionaries of two kinds — those that have the superior training to argue dialectically with the principal classes of Hindus, and those that have the practical and administrative training to look after the large and growing congregations in various parts of the empire. The relations of the missionaries with the natives of India are satisfactory. The missionaries are looked upon not only as angels of light, but as ministers of benevolence. When natives are in trouble or difficulty they send to the neighbouring missionary, and in times of pestilence and famine it is the missionaries that have always marched in the very van of beneficence and of relief.

*Richard Temple*

The character of the native Christians is also satisfactory, and worthy of the care that has been bestowed upon them. For I say, and there are hundreds of magistrates and of merchants and other independent witnesses who will bear me out in my assertion, that the native Christians are thoroughly well behaved, and are all the better in every walk of life for the Christian education and training that they have received. You will ask, In what does this goodness consist? It consists in this: that they, without exception, educate their children, and that the children so educated receive enlightened education in the sharpest contrasts to the morally unhealthy and the degrading education in which the heathen children are brought up. Remember that it is a difficult thing in any country, even in our European countries, to induce every man, down to the poorest, to send his children to school. The native Christians in India, now to be numbered by hundreds of thousands — and, ere long, to be numbered

by millions — send their children to school without any exception whatsoever. In the attendance upon their churches the native Christian congregations are not surpassed in regularity of attendance by any congregations in Europe. You will also find statistically that the proportion of communicants is very considerable. You will further find that these native Christians are not, as some people will have told you, mere hangers-on upon the skirts of the missions, or only persons who live from hand to mouth. They are industrious peasant proprietors, owning their own little bits of land which they cultivate in their villages. They hold their Christian faith in hereditary tenure, as it were, from generation to generation. They have been often tried in times of mutiny and rebellion, but have never apostatised. Take them all in all, these humble and unpretending people set an example worthy of consideration by their Christian brethren in Europe. They support their ministry, each and all. Though they are poor, yet they are industrious. They are people who never drink, who never run into any excess, who have their small savings. They have not the advantage of the organisation of friendly societies like we have in England, yet, nevertheless, every man saves a little; and of that little he gives to the support of his minister, to the building of his chapel, and to the organisation of his church in the broadest sense of the word. Remember, please, all this when measuring your opportunity and your responsibility.

*Richard Temple*

Likewise the system of State education, as carried on by the Government, aids wondrously in India in enlightening the people; the missionaries themselves following the example, or, perhaps, the Government are following their example, to educate largely. The fact that so many tens of thousands of natives who do not profess Christianity, nevertheless, without the slightest hesitation, entrust their children to

the Christian missionaries, while all the time there are Government schools open to them, speaks volumes for the confidence our missionaries have inspired amongst the masses of the people. This education not only spreads amongst the masses of the population, but it is working wonders among the upper and middle classes. It is leading men to look towards a religion of the monotheistic or theistic kind. It is inducing them to abjure the faith of their fathers, if I may call it faith — or rather, the superstition of their fathers. It is leading men to open their consciences, their intellects, their faculties to the revelation of Divine truth. There is a sect called the Hindu Theistic Reformers. I shall not trouble you with the vernacular names which this sect has in different parts of the country, but, as its operations now are extending among all the educated class, they constitute a most important moral and religious movement. It is for you, my Christian brethren, to exert yourselves to attract that movement in the direction of Christianity. There is difficulty in attracting it, because these people have considerable intellect. They are not easily reasoned with. They cannot possibly be talked over. They must be convinced by the power of Christian argument, and, we should say, by the still greater power of Divine grace.

*Richard Temple*

While there is this vast spread of enlightenment amongst the men, the young men, and the boys, on the other hand the women and the girls of all ages, who once remained in darkness and in seclusion, are now gradually but rapidly emerging and striding into the light. For female education by the State has made not only a beginning, but a considerable progress. There are now thousands of girls' schools scattered over the country, attended by tens of thousands of female children, and within the next generation, no doubt, the great moral movement, the great instalment of progress to be ex-

pected, is the spread of female education, and that is a matter which ought to command the sympathies of every lady present. Remember it is a difficult thing to get schoolmistresses in India, because of the social prejudices, and because of the early age at which the girls are married. But there are, we grieve to think, large numbers of widows who, according to the Hindu system, must lead a thoroughly miserable life without hope or occupation in the world, and for them the honoured profession of school-mistress opens an excellent career. But, ladies, especially ladies present, I particularly commend to your increasing attention the cause of the Zenana Mission. The schools of which I have been speaking have been for the humbler kinds of girls; but the operations for which I venture to bespeak your best exertions, are those of the Zenana Missions, which are carried on, not in the villages, nor in the busy streets of the towns, but in the houses, in the apartments, of the middle classes and of the wealthy. It is most important that the enlightenment should spread among the upper classes of the women, in order that it may be the leaven to affect the whole mass of female education throughout British India. But these benevolent operations in the inner apartments of the women necessarily demand a peculiarly delicate organisation — a sort of organisation which cannot be roughly attempted by us plain, practical administrators, as it requires all the gentle and patient thought which the educated women of England are peculiarly qualified to exercise. You cannot do better for the cause of Christianity than to continue these exertions on behalf of your Eastern sisters, in the full confidence that such educational enlightenment must be necessarily followed by the propagation of Christianity.

*Richard Temple*

I shall conclude by reminding you that, as patriotic

people, you may be confident that the missions in India are doing a work which strengthens the imperial foundations of British power, and raises our national repute in the eyes of the many millions of people committed to our charge. You may be also confident that the results are fully commensurate with the expenditure. As an old Finance Minister of India, I ought to know, if anybody does, when the money's worth is got by any operation; and myself having also administered, from first to last, provinces which comprise nearly half British India — I say that, of all the departments I have ever administered, I never saw one more efficient than the missionary department, and of all the hundreds of officers I had under my command, European officers and gentlemen, I have never seen a better body of men than the Protestant missionaries. Of all the departments I have administered, I have never known one in which a more complete result was obtained than in the department — the grand department which is represented by the Protestant missions. You may say that you ought to have not only statistics and reports to convince you, but that you ought to have corroboration of all the fine things that are told you. Now, for most of the statistics that are published by the missionaries you have absolute official verification. The census of the native Christians of India is as trustworthy as the census of the Europeans of British India itself. The main facts upon which you rely when you give your subscriptions to the missionary cause are as certain as any financial, or commercial, or political, or administrative fact whatever. As regards the evidence, you have that of some among the greatest administrators, the bravest soldiers, and the most skilful politicians that have ever adorned the annals of the East. I wish that some of them could be present upon this platform to bear witness of what they have seen and known. They are

*Richard Temple*

men accustomed to make responsible statements which shall command the trust of their countrymen, and even the reliance of the Government itself. They are not men likely to be misled by prejudice or by enthusiasm; on the contrary, they are cool, calculating men. Would that they were here to bear evidence to-night. But, having administered the finances of India for several years, having governed in succession some of her largest provinces, having also by fate been cast among the troubles and difficulties of almost every part of British India, from north to south, from east to west — I have thought it my duty, without claiming any credit whatever for myself, to stand before you, to give my personal testimony, and to add to that testimony whatever weight I could by presiding over your deliberations this evening.[6]

*Richard Temple*

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Now, this was a typical presentation. Civil servants of high rank upon returning to England routinely addressed gatherings of persons who were interested in or could be persuaded to take an interest in Church work. Sir Richard Temple's volume, *Oriental Experience*, from which the preceding address is taken contains other addresses making the same sorts of points to the same sorts of groups. In November 1881 he is addressing the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts at Lincoln. In November 1882 he is addressing the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States at New York.

In these addresses too Temple reiterates what we see was by then the standard assessment of other religions. Howsoever excellent and attractive the poetic accounts be of

[6] Sir Richard Temple, *Oriental Experience, Essays and Addresses delivered on various occasions*, John Murray, London, 1883, pp. 155-65.

Buddhism as given in Arnold's "The Light of Asia," he says, "the actual Buddhism of India and Tibet is as degraded and degrading as can well be imagined." Islam is a harder nut to crack, he says: it has the advantage of having come after Christianity and of having borrowed many of its teachings. These latter lend it some merits. But the character it inculcates is narrow, bigoted, intolerant in the extreme. His harshest words — exactly as in the case of missionaries, exactly as in the case of scholars we shall soon encounter — are reserved for Hinduism. "I cannot give you an exact idea," he says so as not to injure the delicate sensibilities of his audience, "of the vicious orgies which occur constantly in the Hindu temples. There is a considerable amount of immorality, which is practically the outcome of the religion; though, on the other hand, there are many domestic virtues practised by the people, showing how much of goodness would be produced, if the religion were purer." What has to be done is clear: "When (while) contemplating the Hindus you recall the absurdity of their superstitions, and the immorality of many among their practices," Temple declares, "you will see the need of carrying on missionary work in India."

One hears of reformers of course, he says, but "the Hindus who strive in our day to purify their faith are thinking themselves out of Hinduism." He points to the reformers styling themselves as the Brahmo Samaj: "...many of them are almost persuaded to be Christians. Some of the their ministers actually preach sermons from texts taken from the Bible, and they have declared that the British Government may be the secular ruler of England, but the supreme ruler is no less than Christ the Lord"; if you listen to their sermons, he says, if you see the addresses of welcome which they have lately given to the missionaries of the Oxford Mission to Calcutta, "you can judge whether they are not on the high road to

Christianity." Again, what has to be done is clear: "if you can send out missionaries intellectually able to cope with these men, a rich harvest may be reaped."

He points again to "the fortunate fact" that almost one-eighth of all British subjects in India are untouchables and tribals who "are beyond the pale of the principal Oriental religions, and their minds present a *tabula rasa* on which Christianity may work."

In each of the lectures Temple urges his audiences to support the work of missionaries. He points to the successes which have already been achieved, half a million have already been converted, he says; "It (the number converted to Christianity) is now advancing fifty percent every ten years during the generation (thirty years) ending with the year 1880," he tells them, "if it goes on at that rate, during the present generation there will be by the year 1910 about 2,000,000 of native Christians on your hands..." His imagery is martial, and he has no doubt about who has to direct and bear the primary responsibility for the campaign: noting that it has been possible to train three hundred native ministers, he says, "But for a long time to come the prime movers in these operations must continue to be European. And we hope that a great Christian, and if we may use the term, ecclesiastical army will be raised, the rank and file consisting of natives, while the captains and generals are highly qualified Europeans."

He is all zeal and optimism for the prospect, for now to the work of missionaries is added the impact of the work of the neutral Government. "During the coming generation," he says recalling the advances which have already been made, "the result is likely to be even greater, because the work is now backed up, not only by European energy and the zeal of the Protestant Church, but also by the influence which

education on the part of the State is producing throughout the land and amongst all classes of the people. Thus India is like a mighty bastion which is being battered by heavy artillery. We have given blow after blow, and thud after thud, and the effect is not at first very remarkable; but at last with a crash the mighty structure will come toppling down, and it is our hope that some day the heathen religions of India will in like manner succumb."

There is every prospect of success, he tells his audiences, for it is not a Sisyphean task, if at all "it is that sort of ascent which soon leads to a summit, from which we shall survey the promised land." "And when we reach the top, what prospect shall we see," Temple asks, and answers: "We shall see churches in India raising up their spires towards heaven, Christian villages extending over whole tracts of country, churches crowded with dusky congregations and dusky communicants at the altar tables. We shall hear the native girls singing or studying for the universities under missionary auspices. Those things, and many others, I have seen, and would to God I could fix them on the minds of my audience as they are upon my own...."

The aspiration and expectation of one manning the Government which was "neutral" on religious matters. And he was no ordinary factotum. He had been Finance Minister, he had been Lt. Governor of the Bengal Presidency, he had been Governor of the Bombay Presidency — as he told the audiences he had been Governor of 105 million of the total 200 million subjects of British India. Thus, not just a representative voice, an authoritative one.[7]

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[7] For the passages given above, see Sir Richard Temple, *Oriental Experience, op. cit.*, pp. 131-155.

*In a word*

In a word, the work of the Church was not done by the missionaries alone, the religiously "neutral" administrators did a good bit of it. Correspondingly, the work of the Empire was not done by the administrators alone, the missionaries did a good bit of it. And that contribution was acknowledged by ruler after ruler. "It is not only our duty," declared Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister, "but in our own interest to promote the diffusion of Christianity as far as possible throughout the length and breadth of India"; "Every additional Christian," declared Lord Halifax, the Secretary of State, "is an additional bond of union with this country and an additional source of strength to the Empire"; "They are doing for India", said Lord Reay introducing a deputation of Indian Christians to the Prince of Wales, "more than all those civilians, soldiers, judges and governors whom Your Highness has met"; they are "the most potent force in India," declared Sir Macworth Young...[8]

[8] Citations from R.E. Speer's *Missionary Principles and Practice*, and Arthur Mayhew's *Christianity and Government of India* recalled in *Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee*, Government Printing Press, Nagpur, 1956, Volume 1, pp. 40-1.

# 6

# The Church comes to Understand

There had been a tussle initially — officers of the East India Company forbade missionaries from operating in the territories they took over. The operations of missionaries would ignite the religious passions of the natives and thus impede the Company's work, they felt. They fear we will admonish them for their conduct, felt the missionaries.

When the Charter of the East India Company came up for renewal several persons who had been in India, several officials of the Company argued that the restrictions on the missionaries should continue: the Indians are civilised enough and do not need the missionaries, the former submitted; the missionaries and their proselytisation will incite the natives and thereby unsettle the Company's operations, urged the latter.

But the missionaries and their political supporters had prepared a formidable attack. Indians are in the darkest plight, they argued. Indians *can* be converted to Christianity, they argued. The conversion of India to Christianity will spell temporal benefits to the heathens, they argued. Far from unsettling it, the conversion of the heathens to Christianity will consolidate the Empire, they argued.

Wilberforce's speech in the House of Commons was perhaps the most comprehensive statement of their case:

their evidence, their arguments, their exaggerations and falsehoods, their invective were here all gathered in one polemic.

The people of India are today enslaved by, they today groan under the yoke of "a monstrous system of follies and superstitions," the yoke of "the monstrous and absurd superstitions of their native faith," Wilberforce declared. The evils of that faith he noted were "inveterate", not just long-lasting but inherent. He talked of "the dark and degrading superstitions," the inhuman cruelties of Hinduism, of its "mean, licentious, and cruel" nature. On the testimony of many like-minded persons, Wilberforce declared Indians to be mean and petty, to be liars and thieves, widow-burners and murderers of infants. These traits of character, he maintained, were not fortuitous. They flowed necessarily from, to recall the words he quoted of the Directors of the East India Company, "the nature of their superstitions and the degraded character of their deities, as well as the almost entire want of moral instruction among them." "Indeed," Wilberforce proclaimed, "to all who have made it their business to study the nature of idolatrous worship in general, I scarcely need remark, that in its superstitious rites, there has commonly been found to be a natural alliance between obscenity and cruelty; and of the Hindoo superstitions it may be truly affirmed, that they are scarcely less bloody than lascivious; and as the innate modesty of our nature is effaced by the one, so all the natural feelings of humanity are extinguished by the other." As evidence he cited what he said had been calculated by William Carey, one of the most ardent and enthusiastic missionaries who had worked in India: "...Dr. Carey...," he said, "has calculated that, taking in all the various modes and forms of destruction connected with the worship at the temple of Jaggernaut in Orissa, the lives of 100,000 human

beings are annually expended in the service of that single idol." What but inhumanity and callousness would be inculcated by such cheapening of human life ?

Worse of course, there were the sinful deities. In words that we shall find being repeated almost verbatim not just throughout the 19th century but also in tracts put out by missionary organizations right down to the mid-1950's, Wilberforce told the House of Commons: "It has been truly remarked, particularly by the historian of America, that the moral character of a people may commonly be known from the nature and attributes of the objects of its worship. On this principle, we might have anticipated the moral condition of the Hindoos, by ascertaining the character of their deities. If it was truly affirmed of the old pagan mythology, that scarcely a crime could be committed, the perpetrator of which might not plead in his justification, the precedent of one of its national gods; far more truly may it be said, that in the adventures of the countless rabble of Hindoo deities, you may find every possible variety of every practicable crime. Here also, more truly than of old, every vice has its patron as well as its example. Their divinities are absolute monsters of lust, injustice, wickedness and cruelty. In short, their religious system is one grand abomination."

Providence, Wilberforce reminded the House, had provided the remedy — "fully adequate, and specially appropriate to the purpose" — and that remedy was Christianity: "...Providence has provided sufficient means for rescuing them from the depths in which they are now sunk, and I now call on you to open the way for their application; for to us, Sir, I confidently hope is committed the honourable office of removing the barrier which now excludes the access of Christian light, with its long train of attendant blessings, into that benighted land, and thus, of ultimately cheering their

desolate hearts with the beams of heavenly truth, and love, and consolation." No, he was not pleading for any compulsion, he declared, just for lifting the barrier.

He did not want to pretend to conceal from the House, Wilberforce said, that "the hope which, above all others, chiefly gladdens my heart, is that of being instrumental in bringing them into the paths by which they may be led to everlasting felicity" — that is, the hope that their souls would be saved by their becoming Christians — but there was the additional fact: the spread of Christianity would in addition confer several temporal benefits on these groaning natives.

There was no danger, he pointed out. The Muslim rulers converted Hindus and there was no commotion. The Hindus converted to Buddhism and Sikhism and there was no commotion. The Christian missionaries themselves had been converting for centuries now outside the territories of the Company, and there had been no commotion. On the contrary, the missionaries "have been... not only the most esteemed but the most beloved and popular individuals in the country." And he cited the very incident which the critics of the missionaries had been mentioning: a pamphlet which contained material about Prophet Mohammed that was admittedly scurrilous had been issued by a missionary organization. All that had happened, Wilberforce maintained, was that, upon reading it, the son of a native merchant had brought it to a professor at the (Government's) Mohammedan College at Calcutta and requested him to write a refutation. "The true conclusion, Sir, from the incident would be," concluded Wilberforce, "that the natives were so tolerant and patient in what concerns their religion, that even the grossest imprudence could not rouse them to anger."

Not only was there no danger, there was a decided, the surest political advantage. "And I rejoice, Sir, in being able to

assure you," Wilberforce said using words that again would be used almost verbatim for a hundred years, "that if we proceed with that prudence and caution with which all such measures should be conducted, the endeavour to communicate to our fellow-subjects in India, the benefits of Christian light and moral improvement may not only be made without danger, but, what is more, that there is no way whatever by which we should be so likely to promote our political interests in India; because there is no other way by which we should so greatly strengthen the foundations of our government in that country."

The motion to allow the missionaries to proselytise and convert was carried — 89 to 36.[1]

Things settled down swiftly: officials allowed the missionaries to operate freely, a large proportion of officials in fact began helping the Church's work; the missionaries too came to see the point of the officials — that "religious neutrality" of the Government was on the whole the more effective assistance; that the religiously neutral, secular education in Government schools was doing the job all right, that it was smashing the faith of the Hindus in Hinduism and that they had nowhere to turn but to Christianity; that the work of propagation which was now unimpeded and the religious instruction which was going on in the non-governmental, missionary schools were filling this vacuum, they were preparing the "rich harvest" for the Church.

As part of his evidence Sir Charles Trevelyan had drawn the attention of the Select Committee on Indian Territories to what the Calcutta Bible Association had itself had to say on the matter. "The increased demand of the natives for the Scriptures in English," the Association had recorded in its

[1] On the foregoing see Hansard, Volume XXVI, June 22, 1813, Columns 831-873.

16th Annual Report, "has doubtless been in a great measure caused by the advancement of education in that language — the pupils of the various colleges and schools can take home a copy of the Bible or Testament in English, without exciting those fears on the part of their relatives which the same books in the native languages would be likely to excite. The English schools and colleges may be instrumental in preparing the mind of the natives for the appreciation of truth, and so far may prepare for the reception of the Gospel, the Committee therefore conceive it to be their duty to embrace the opportunities now afforded for supplying the New Testament in English to those institutions in which that book is customarily read, and of furnishing the same to the pupils of other schools wherein the New Testament is admitted, who manifest a desire to search the Scriptures for themselves."[2]

"Will you state to the Committee whether the missions receive countenance, assistance, or hinderance from the Government, as such?," the Committee asked The Reverend J. Tucker. Reverend Tucker had just retired as Fellow of Corpus Christi, Oxford, and was Vicar of West Hendred at the time. He had spent 13 1/2 years in India, eleven as the Secretary of the Corresponding Committee of the Church Missionary Society at Madras. He replied: "They receive protection as regards the law, but assistance of either a pecuniary or any other kind they receive none whatsoever, nor am I aware of any application having been made to the Government for assistance to any missions."

As that was circumlocutory, he was again asked: "The question had reference to assistance, encouragement, or hindrance from the Government as such; will you answer the question, so far as relates to the members of the governing

[2] *Minutes of the Evidence taken before The Select Committee on Indian Territories*, 26 May and 2 June, 1853, Appendix 4, p. 260.

body in India, civil or military?" The Reverend Tucker replied, "They, in large numbers, as individuals, give their most cordial support and assistance to missionary proceedings. In the Punjab, I believe nearly the whole of those in authority subscribe very largely, and countenance and support our missions there."

"Do you consider that the countenance and support is given without exciting jealousy or suspicion on the part of the natives?," he was asked. He replied: "Without the slightest suspicion or jealousy; the civil and military servants to whom I refer are men too well experienced in India to attempt to do such a thing if there were any appearance of jealousy."

"Can you state to the Committee any evidence of the improvement in the temporal condition of the native Christians as such?," Reverend Tucker was asked. "I can", replied The Reverend. "In Tinnevelly decidedly, where we have a large body of Christians; their whole habits and appearance are changed; the contrast between them and the heathen is marked, and the effect of Christianity upon their habits of industry is plainly developed; they are more industrious, and are increasing in wealth in consequence."

"How are they disposed towards the British Government?," the Committee asked. "They are heartily attached to the British Government," Reverend Tucker said, "and not a great while ago the Protestant Christians of Tinnevelly, connected with the Church Missionary Society, and with the Society for Propagating the Gospel, sent home an address to the Queen which was presented to Her Majesty by the Archbishop of Canterbury; it will appear in the Report of the Committee of the House of Lords, but I can put it in, if it is thought desirable, now."

He handed in a copy of the address. He was evidently proud of the results of conversion and had reason to expect

that the Committee too would be pleased and would see the assistance the missionaries were rendering to the consolidation of the Empire. The address to the Queen read:

* * * * *

*To Her Most Gracious Majesty Victoria,*
*by the Grace of God, Queen by the Grace of God,*
*Queen of Great Britain and Defender of the Faith*

*A humble Memorial*

We, native Christians of the Province of Tinnevelly, in the English dominions, who, by means of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, and the Church Missionary Society, have embraced the Christian religion, in number of 40,000 persons, presume to approach the feet of your Gracious Majesty, with all humility and reverence, presenting this humble memorial.

We desire to acknowledge in your Majesty's presence that we, your humble subjects, and all our fellow-countrymen, placed by the providence of Almighty God under the just and merciful rule of the English Government, enjoy a happiness unknown to our forefathers in the inestimable blessings of peace, so essential to our country's welfare. Even the most simple and unlearned of our people, recognising this, declare the time to have at length arrived when the "tiger and the fawn drink at the same stream." Impelled, therefore, by the gratitude we feel, we humbly acknowledge it to be our delightful duty, heartily and incessantly, to beseech Almighty God, the King of Kings, to "endue our Gracious Queen plenteously with heavenly gifts, to grant her in health and wealth long to live, to strengthen her that she may vanquish and overcome all her enemies, and finally, after this life, attain everlasting joy and felicity."

Incalculable are the benefits that have accrued to our country from the English rule; and, in addition to the justice, security, and other blessings which all in common enjoy, we who are Christians are bound to be more especially grateful for having received, through the indefatigable exertions of English missionary societies, the privilege of ourselves learning the true religion and its sacred doctrines, and of securing for our sons and our daughters, born in these happier times, the advantages of education. Many among us once were unhappy people, trusting in dumb idols, worshipping before them, and trembling at ferocious demons; but now we all, knowing the true God, and learning His Holy Word, spend our time in peace, with the prospect of leaving this world in comfort, and with the hope of eternal life in the world to come. And we feel that we have not words to express to Your Gracious Majesty the debt of gratitude we owe to God for His bounteous grace.

*A humble Memorial*

Knowing that many among our Hindoo countrymen, both male and female, though still heathen, are beginning to read our Bible and inquire about the true religion, we take comfort in the hope that the Lord will vouchsafe to them His saving grace, and in future also, as hitherto, will hear the prayers of His faithful children throughout the world in their behalf.

We have heard with much sorrow that there are in these times in many of the kingdoms of Europe revolutions and sanguinary wars; but we have heard also, with the greatest joy, that in happy England peace and prosperity prevail, and that the income of the Missionary, Bible, and other societies has been constantly on the increase. We firmly trust that God will overrule all events to the advancement of truth and peace; and will grant to many nations, and to the whole world, the same genuine knowledge and happiness which

have been granted unto us.

Our countrymen, who behold the magnificent bridges building by the English, the avenues of trees planting by them along all our roads, and the vast number of boys and girls, children of Christian, Heathen, Mohammedan, and Roman-catholic parents, learning gratuitously both in Tamul and English, at the expense of English missions, repeat their ancient proverbs, and say, "Instruction is indeed the opening of sightless eyeballs," and "The father who gives no education to his child is guilty of a crime;" and especially when they behold among Christians, girls, and aged men and women, learning to read the Word of God, they exclaim, "This truly is wonderful; this is charity indeed!" Surely then, we who enjoy those inestimable blessings, under a Christian Government, are, above all our fellow subjects, bound to acknowledge to Your Gracious Majesty our obligations to be at all times unfeignedly thankful for them; and we would also entreat, with the confidence and humility of children, that Your Majesty, agreeable to the words of Holy Writ, "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers," will still graciously extend to us your care and protection.

*A humble Memorial*

We add also our humble and fervent prayers that Almighty God will bless Your Majesty's Gracious Consort, the Prince Albert, Your Majesty's son and heir, the Prince of Wales, and all the members of the Royal Family, and ever bestow upon them all happiness and prosperity.

Thus, with deepest reverence,
Your Majesty's faithful subjects and most humble servants.[3]

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[3] *Ibid*, Minutes of Evidence taken on 28 July, 1853, pp. 708, 711-2.

At present, members of the Select Committee observed, no religious instruction is given in Government schools. What is the effect of the purely secular education which is given on the fidelity of the students to Hinduism, they inquired. It certainly increases their infidelity to Hinduism, it undermines their faith in Hinduism, the missionaries pointed out to the man, but there was a danger: it also undermines faith in religion in general they said, and that ought to be remedied.

They heartily endorsed the Government's policy of being neutral: "I should be sorry to see the Government departing from its present position of strict neutrality," Reverend Tucker told the Committee, adding, "I should be very sorry if the Government were to think of rendering any assistance whatsoever to our Society (the Church Missionary Society), further than protection. If I knew of any proposal from the Government to assist our missions, I am sure the Society itself, and certainly I personally, should at once decline it";[4] "The natives are now convinced that Christianity is left to depend upon its own merits," explained Reverend Kennedy, "that it neither seeks nor employs for its diffusion any means but those of argument and suasion. If the Government openly announce Christianity to be a part of the education it imparts, Christianity will immediately lose the high vantage point it now occupies."[5]

But the Government is tilting too far in its efforts to be neutral, they told the Committee. In the schools and colleges it has set up, even those who want of their own accord to attend Bible classes are provided no facilities to do so; teachers are not allowed to use the Bible even for instruction in English, or for moral instruction; they are not allowed to

[4] *Ibid*, Minutes of Evidence taken on 28 July, 1853, pp. 100-101.
[5] *Ibid*, Minutes of Evidence taken on 8 August, 1853, p. 786.

impart religious instruction even after their duty hours.

This is going too far, they said. It militates against Christianity, they said, as it gives the impression that the Government is indifferent to Christianity. It is a false position for a Christian Government to take, they said. By sticking to these instructions, they said, the Government is in effect *departing* from the principle of neutrality: at the Sanskrit and Mohammedan Colleges which the Government has set up at Calcutta, they pointed out, the Pandits and Maulvis are allowed to use their "Shasters" and Koran, they are allowed to impart information about their religions to students who ask for it. Let the Government be truly neutral, they said — let it allow Bible classes to be held, requiring only that attendance at them be voluntary, let it allow teachers in Government schools to impart instruction in Christianity in their private time. Reverend Carr even argued that if the Government could not do this much, it should close down Government schools altogether!

These suggestions were meant only for Government schools of course, for no restrictions of that kind applied to the schools that the missionaries were running themselves, as the following exchanges at the Select Committee hearings bear out:

- "It is understood that your institutions are distinctly intended to produce the conversion of the children?," the Committee asked Reverend Benjamin Rice. He had been in India for seventeen years as a missionary of the London Missionary Society. Reverend Rice answered: "Decidedly". "Just as much as your preaching is?," the Committee asked him. "Quite so," replied Reverend Rice.[6]
- Reverend James Kennedy who had been telling the Committee that while neutrality was desirable, the Gov-

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 782.

ernment was going too far in tilting against Christianity, was asked by the Committee, "Admitting, as I understand you to do, that neutrality on the part of the Government is its proper policy, is not it most desirable that such neutrality should be really and *bona fide*, and even rigidly carried out, and is not the fault on the right side, according to your view of the case, when the Government refuses to permit any apparent tampering, on the part of the instructors whom it employs, with the religion of the young men at the Government schools?" This is what Reverend Kennedy observed in reply: "I think Government should not interfere officially in favour of Christianity; but to interfere with private instruction (he was referring to teachers in Government schools imparting religious instruction in their private time) seems to me to be going beyond the province of the Government. I may say, in reference to that subject, that I believe our mission schools have a vast advantage over the Government schools, in this respect, that we are at perfect liberty to inculcate the most important truth upon the natives, and no umbrage whatever can be taken at our doing so, as we do it on our own responsibility. On that account, I believe the mission schools will do much more for India than the Government schools can do, owing to the peculiar position of the Government." [7]

On the figures Reverend Kennedy had at hand there were at the time about 23 thousand students in Government schools and over a lakh in mission schools.

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[7] *Ibid*, pp. 787-8.

## *The sinful association*

There was another thing which was troubling the missionaries, and they pressed for its removal with vigour, with great invective, and with patent falsehood: this Christian Government, they maintained, has not yet fully rid itself of connections with the heinous and sinful idolatry of this land. In Surat, they said, in Mysore, they said, in Kumaon, they said, when the local Rajah or chieftain proceeds in procession on a religious occasion, British, Christian officials and soldiers have to stand on the sidelines, sometimes even to fire in salute. They wanted this pandering to idolatry to be stopped forthwith.

The other way in which the Government was perpetuating and encouraging this sinful practice, they said, was even more consequential. As is well known, temples used to be maintained from lands which had been assigned to them over the centuries. The East India Company's Government had resumed the lands, but in some instances it had recognised an obligation and had continued some grants in lieu of having taken over the assets which in effect were those of the temples. The missionaries found this continuance of grants an intolerable sin — against both man and God. And they urged that the grants be stopped forthwith. The Minutes of the Select Committee contain several memoranda from the missionaries to this effect — they not only focus on the same instances and present the same arguments, the very words in them, whole sentences and paragraphs in them are identical, showing close coordination.

The Jagannath Temple at Puri was their special target in the present round. A single example will do: it is the petition which Protestant missionaries working in Bengal and Orissa presented first to the Court of Directors of the East India

Company, and then to the Parliament's Select Committee the proceedings of which we have been following. Here is the petition, its tenor and exaggerations entirely representative:

* * * * *

The humble Petition of the undersigned Protestant Missionaries now resident in Calcutta,
Humbly showeth,

*A humble Petition*

That your petitioners are most earnestly desirous to secure the attention of your Honourable House to the annual grant made by the East India Company to the well known Temple of Juggernauth, at Puri, in Orissa.

That in the month of May 1850, the following memorial on this subject was transmitted through the Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the Court of Directors of the East India Company:-

"To the Honourable the Court of Directors of the East India Company — The respectful Memorial of various Protestant Missionaries labouring in Bengal and Orissa,

"Showeth,

"That your memorialists, being missionaries belonging to various Protestant denominations, and having laboured (most of them) many years in India, have had special and frequent opportunities of knowing that the annual pecuniary grant from the Government Treasury to the Temple of Juggernauth perpetuates, and in no ordinary degree encourages, the vilest characteristics of Hindoo idolatry as notoriously connected with that shrine.

"Your memorialists, with deep pain and sorrow, beg to direct the attention of your Honourable Court to the pernicious effect of the Government donation in impeding and to frequently rendering unavailing their endeavours to eschew

the people of these provinces from the curse of idolatry, and to bring them under the benign influence of the pure and holy religion of Christ. The great masses of unhappy men and women, gathered from all parts of India round the shrine, believe not only that the British Government acknowledges the divinity of Juggernauth, but that it is most anxious that the worship of that idol should be celebrated on a magnificent scale: and the priests and pandahs connected with the temple, who fatten on the misery and credulity of the pilgrims, do everything in their power to strengthen them in their conviction; they rebuke the missionaries publicly, and represent them to the people as factious opponents to the Government, and they triumphantly appeal to its annual pecuniary donation as an unanswerable proof that it approves of their superstition, and desires that idolatry should be maintained as the religion of the land. Your memorialists, therefore, cannot but express their deep-felt regret that the Government of this country, by its support of the Temple of Juggernauth, should thus virtually throw the weight of its influence into the scale of idolatry, and thereby, without intending it, impede the progress of the Gospel of peace and love.

*A humble Petition*

"Your memorialists would further respectively remind your Honourable Court that not a few of the vast numbers of pilgrims who flock to Juggernauth-Poree, are drawn thither, in a great measure, by the celebrity which the annual Government grant confers on that shrine, a distinction which it alone enjoys, and which is the boast and one of the strongest arguments of the pilgrim-hunters, a body of men whose business it is to traverse the country in all directions for the purpose of enticing persons to undertake the pilgrimage. This is a fact which, considering the magnitude of the evils, physical as well as moral, directly flowing from this pilgrim-

age, can never be sufficiently deplored. Indeed, the misery, suffering and vice witnessed on these occasions can scarcely be exaggerated. The pilgrims, during their sojourn at Poree, are made to believe that it is an indispensable part of their religious duty to live upon the food prepared in the temple, from whence it can only be obtained at exorbitant rates, and of the coarsest and most unwholesome description. On the road tens of thousands sleep night after night on the bare mud, and have no shelter from the rain, which frequently falls in torrents. Exposure, privation, and fatigue necessarily induce disease, and the mortality is fearful. The number of pilgrims annually resorting to the shrine is immense; at the Ruth festival alone, which attracts scarcely one-third of the whole, it varies from 80,000 to 200,000, and it is supposed, with too much reason, that nearly one-tenth annually perish, causing the outskirts of Poree, and the roads for miles around, to resemble a vast Golgotha. The brutal callousness of the priests, and of the people generally, who seem utterly regardless of the sufferings and dying agonies of the pilgrims, is not the least revolting part of this tragedy. Certain of your memorialists have witnessed these things till their hearts grew sick within them, and have seen with their own eyes scenes of demoralization, wretchedness and woe, which baffle description. Your memorialists acknowledge with thankfulness and delight your wise and merciful abolition of the rite of Suttee; but, while Suttee numbered its hundreds, Juggernauth, in a more protracted form, slays his thousands of human victims. It is, moreover, deserving of notice, that the pilgrims suffering from disease carry it to their homes and to other localities; and, accordingly, along the whole line of march the cholera nearly every year follows in their train, ravaging the villages on each side of the road, radiating far into the country, and

*A humble Petition*

sweeping away thousands of its useful population.

"Your memorialists beg also, with all deference, to call the notice of your Honourable Court to the apparent inconsistency of endowing at one and the same time schools and colleges for the intellectual and moral improvement of the people and a large idolatrous establishment, which tends to perpetuate their intellectual and moral debasement. Intelligent natives are utterly at a loss to understand the meaning of a policy so ambiguous.

*A humble Petition*

"Your memorialists, as servants of the living God, would further respectfully, but most earnestly, remind your Honourable Court that idolatry is not only a curse to mankind and a bar to all true national and social improvement, but that any approval, sanction or countenance lent to it, directly or indirectly, is represented in the Word of God as a grievous offence against the Majesty of Heaven. Your memorialists therefore entertain the hope that, looking at the evident and inherent wrong of a Christian Government's connexion with idolatry in any form, as well as at the fearful amount of vice, suffering and loss of life which springs from pilgrimage to the shrine of Juggernauth in particular, your Honourable Court will be induced to check these great evils as far as they are under your control, by discontinuing altogether a support so inconsistent with reason, humanity, and religion, and which contributes in no slight degree to the misery, temporal and eternal, of the people whom Providence has entrusted to your charge, and whose welfare your Honourable Court is bound by every means in your power to promote...."

* * * * *

Then followed calculations from a petition they had submitted earlier to the Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, cal-

culations which will do any tax lawyer credit, to say nothing of any Jesuit: by these the missionaries sought to establish not just that the Government was under no obligation to compensate the Temple for the lands it had resumed, but that it had already over the years paid the Temple more than was ever due to the latter! And they concluded:

* * * * *

"Your memorialists further show unto your Lordship in Council, that they forwarded a memorial against the donation to Jagannath to the Honourable Court of Directors in the year 1850, and therein expressed their deep and solemn convictions respecting the fearful misery, and the awful aggregate of moral evil, that had resulted from the connexion of the Government of India with that famous temple. These convictions they retain now in all their force; but as their object at present is to deal with the claims of the temple, not on the grounds of morality, benevolence and religion, nor even on the grounds of public policy, but on those only of simple arithmetical account, they abstain from dwelling on any other considerations. They conclude with the humble request and the earnest hope that your Lordship in Council will now, by passing the draft Act of 1851, finally terminate the connexion of Government with the temple of Jagannath, and leave it to be sustained by its own votaries till the time (which your memorialists pray may not be distant in India) when the idols shall be banished from the earth, and the true Lord of the universe, whose right it is to reign, shall establish His peaceful kingdom throughout the world."[8]

* * * * *

[8] Appendix 4, to the *Report from the Select Committee on Indian Territories.*

On the word of Carey and Wilberforce, how many lives were lost every year because of this one idol? A hundred thousand. And according to these missionaries? Twenty thousand. And the fact? Charles Buller had been Commissioner at Cuttack for several years. Impelled by the fabrications of the missionaries, on 19 May, 1813 he wrote directly to the Court of Directors of the East India Company. He too had heard horrid stories about the place and the Rath Yatra, he said. "I have passed several times backwards and forwards between Cattach and Jaghanath (and that too, just previous to the Ruth Jattrah or Festival of the Chariot)," he told them, "without seeing many objects of wretchedness. I certainly have seen two or three poor wretched objects, exhausted by their long journey; and almost starving; but this is no very great surprise, when it is recollected that the pilgrims (he put their number at over 100,000 at the time of the Yatra alone) come from all parts of Hindostan, from upwards of 1,600 miles distance, and that a large proportion of these consist of the old and infirm, who come for the express purpose of laying their bones within the precincts of the city." Contrary to what the missionaries had been alleging, the Hindu religion enjoined no duty on anyone to throw himself under the wheels of the Rath, he wrote, adding, "Indeed, the infrequency of the act is the fullest proof, I conceive, that it is not an act of duty prescribed to any sect of Hindoos whatever. I was at Jaghanath during the whole of the Ruth Jattrah (in 1809 I think it was), and I heard but of one instance of an immolation under the wheels of the car. I should not suppose it possible that another instance could have happened during that festival, without my hearing of it. But supposing, instead of one, there were ten times the number, what would it amount to? — that out of a population of nearly two hundred millions, (for I suppose the whole

of the Hindoo population, as far as Cabul, to be not much short of two hundred millions), there are to be found ten fanatics, fools, and madmen enough to commit such an act at Jaghanath." He went on to nail other falsehoods — about the songs sung during the Yatra being licentious, about the idols and the rest. But no fact stopped the missionaries.

In the face of such venomous calumny, is it difficult to see why even as self-assured a person as Swami Vivekananda was driven to rage?

*A joint endeavour*

"But are you not reading *ex post* a design into the course events took? Were there not major divergences among the missionary groups?"

We encounter this sort of a response to this day: when attention is drawn to what missionaries are doing to foment secession in the North-East, the response is, "O, but that is just the Baptists, and there are just a few of them. That is not the Church as such."

With so many sponsors patronising so many missionary societies, there naturally was competition for the harvest of converts, and several missionaries narrated to the Select Committee how they were not getting, how the converts *they* had secured were not getting the facilities that the others were getting: Roman Catholic missionaries in particular complained that their chaplains were not being given adequate opportunities to meet the spiritual needs of Catholics, that the stipend for a Catholic child was one-third that of a Protestant child etc. But these were minor complaints: "I have lived too long in a country where people worship cows," scoffed Macaulay, "to think much of the differences which part Christians from Christians." On the overall objective missionaries of

all hues were one, they cooperated fully with one another. Documents as well as oral evidence tendered by the missionaries speak to the coordination: the petition on Jagannath that we have just seen was typical in this respect: it was submitted on behalf of Protestant Missionaries of various denominations and Churches resident in Calcutta; it incorporated the memorial which had been submitted earlier by the Protestant Missionaries working in Bengal and Orissa; simultaneously other memoranda making the same points were received by the Select Committee. In addition, there is the testimony of the missionaries that directly answers this question.

"Can you state to the Committee," the Right Reverend T. Carr was asked, "how far the different agents and missionaries of the various Protestant communions in India agree, generally speaking with each other, in prosecuting their common work, without disturbing each other?" Reverend Carr was categorical: "In all missionary work," he said, "the missionaries labour in harmony, and, generally speaking, adopt one system."[9]

Max Muller went further: missionary work itself unites "both at home and abroad, those who are widely separated by the barriers of theological sects," he observed in his lecture on Missions. And as evidence he cited what the 1873 publication, *India, Progress and Condition* had reported: "The large body of European and American missionaries settled in India bring their various moral influences to bear upon the country with the greater force, because they act together with a compactness which is but little understood. Though belonging to various denominations of Christians, yet from the nature of their work, their isolated position, and their long experience, they have been led to think rather of the numerous questions on which they agree, than of those on which they differ, and they coop-

[9] *Report of the Select Committee on Indian Territories, op. cit.*, Minutes of Evidence taken on 3 August 1853, p. 141.

erate heartily together. Localities are divided among them by friendly arrangements, and, with a few exceptions, it is a fixed rule among them that they will not interfere with each other's converts and each other's spheres of duty. School books, translations of the Scriptures and religious works, prepared by various missions, are used in common; and help and improvements secured by one mission are freely placed at the command of all. The large body of missionaries resident in each of the presidency towns form missionary conferences, hold periodic meetings, and act together on public matters. They have frequently addressed the Indian government on important social questions involving the welfare of the native community, and have suggested valuable improvements in existing laws. During the past twenty years, on five occasions, general conferences have been held for mutual consultation respecting their missionary work; and in January last, at the latest of these gatherings, at Allahabad, 121 missionaries met together, belonging to twenty different societies, and including several men of long experience who have been twenty years in India."[10]

And so the effort to civilize India, to secure it for the British Empire, to gather it up as the rich harvest for the Church proceeded as a joint endeavour: the civil servants helped by many devices, including among these their "religious neutrality"; "the soldiers of the Cross" reinforced each other's efforts; and the scholars helped working to "undermine" and "encircle" and thereby prepare the way for "the soldiers of the Cross" to "finally storm" "the strong fortress of Brahminism". It is to the third group — the objective scholars — that we must now turn.

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[10] "Westminster Lecture on Missions," in *Chips from a German Workshop,* Volume IV, Scribners, New York, 1884, pp. 263-4. Recall words to the same effect in the address cited earlier of Sir Richard Temple to the Baptist Missionary Society in 1883.

# 7

## To "Encircle, Undermine, and finally Storm"

"... I still have a great work to do, and I often feel that I might have done a great deal more, if I had kept the one object of my life more steadily in view. I sometimes wish you would help me more in doing that, and insist on my working harder at the *Veda* and nothing else. I hope I shall finish that work, and I feel convinced, though I shall not live to see it, that this edition of mine and the translation of the Veda, will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India and on the growth of millions of souls in that country. It is the root of that religion and to show them what the root is, I feel sure, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last 3,000 years. If those thoughts pass through one's mind, one does grudge the hours and days and weeks that are spent in staying in people's houses, and one feels that with the many blessings showered upon one, one ought to be up and doing what may be God's work."

Exposing the very roots of another culture so as to uproot everything that has flowed from it for 3,000 years, and this seen as God's work. Not quite the motive and belief we would associate with an objective scholar. And yet that is Max Muller writing to his wife in December 1866 about his

translation of the Rig Veda.[1] And soon he is maintaining that that way of proceeding — of showing up the roots so as to uproot all that has sprung from them during three thousand years — is indeed having the desired effect. In his famous "Lecture on Missions" to which we shall return, he talks of the way "the mere presence of Christianity" in India is leading the Hindus to discard the excrescences of millennia and move towards a purer form of worship. And in this the scholars who had shown up the roots have made a major contribution, he maintains.

These ancient books contained "treasures of truth", he concedes. "But granting all this, we may well understand why an attempt to claim for these books a divine origin, and thus to make them an artificial foundation for a new religion, failed. The successor of Ram Mohun Roy, the present head of the Brahmo-Samaj, the wise and excellent Debendranath Tagore, was for a time even more decided in holding to the Vedas as the sole foundation of the new faith. But this could not last. As soon as the true character of the Vedas, which but few people in India can understand, became known, partly through the efforts of native, partly of European scholars, the Indian reformers relinquished the claim of divine inspiration in favor of their Vedas, and were satisfied with a selection of passages from the works of the ancient sages of India, to express and embody the creed which the members of the Brahmo-Samaj hold in common."[2] He recalls this effect of showing up the roots even more explicitly in his Opening Address to the International Congress of Orientalists. He observes, "Besides this purely literary movement, there is a

[1] *The Life and Letters of the Rt. Hon. Fredrich Max Muller*, edited by his wife, Longmans, London, 1902, Volume I, p.328.

[2] Max Muller, "Lecture on Missions," December 1873, in *Chips from a German Workshop*, Volume IV, Scribners, New York, 1884, pp. 238-75, at p. 259.

religious movement going on in India, the Brahmo-Samaj, which, both in its origin and its later development, is mainly the result of European influences. It began with an attempt to bring the modern corrupt forms of worship back to the purity and simplicity of the Vedas; and by ascribing to the Veda the authority of a Divine Revelation, it was hoped to secure that infallible authority without which no religion was supposed to be possible. How was that movement stopped, and turned into a new channel? Simply by the publication of the Veda, and by the works of European scholars, such as Stevenson, Mill, Rosen, Wilson, and others, who showed to the natives what the Veda really was, and made them see the folly of their way."[3]

He holds up for view the expansive effects of oriental studies, of the comparative study of religions: the sacred books of the principal religions are being placed "side by side with perfect impartiality," and he is confident that even the critics will soon be grateful to these scholars for having shown by evidence which cannot be controverted, that all religions spring from the same sacred soil, the human heart; that all are quickened by the same divine spirit, the still small voice; and that, "though the outward forms of religion may change, may wither and decay, yet, as long as man is what he is and what he has been, he will postulate again and again the Infinite as the very condition of the Finite, he will yearn for something which the world cannot give, he will feel his weakness and dependence, and in that weakness and dependence discover the deepest sources of his hope, and trust, and strength."[4] We find him on occasion being quite open about Christianity, and even about the Bible: "I look upon

[3] Max Muller, "Opening Address", September 1874, in *Chips from a German Workshop*, Volume IV, *op. cit.*, pp. 335-6.

[4] "Opening Address" *op. cit.*, pp. 328-9.

the account of creation as given in Genesis as simply historical," he writes to the Duke of Argyll in 1875, "as showing the highest expression that could be given by the Jews at that early time to their conception of the beginning of the world. We have learnt, certainly since Kant, that the knowledge of beginnings is denied to us, that all we can do is to grope back a little way, and then to trust. I think I have a right to accept a special beginning of man, because I cannot account for what he is, if I look upon him as the product of anything else known to me. I require no more a leap for him than for any other creature; I accept him at what I find him from the first dawn of history to the present day. I have no feeling for or against Darwinism, and I always try in approaching these problems to care for nothing that I may care for in my heart. I am certain that we are led; I am certain we ought to follow; I am certain that, even if we go wrong, as long as we do it because we will not resist the power of facts and arguments, we are right. If Darwin's facts were irresistible, I should accept the ape-theory without a murmur, because I should feel that we were meant to accept it. But I feel with you that never was a theory of such importance put forward with a smaller array of powerful arguments than by Darwin. 'What is, is best:' these were Kingsley's last words, used no doubt in a purely ethical sense, but applicable nevertheless to all pursuit of truth."[5] We find him admonishing an author for pouring sarcasm on and being excessively critical of other religions: we must see another religion with the eyes of the believer in that religion, he counsels; "We pity a man who is born blind — we are not angry with him," he writes; "A true spirit of Christianity," he writes, "will rather lead us to shut our eyes against many things which are revolting to us in the

[5] *The Life and Letters of the Rt. Hon. Fredrich Max Muller, op. cit.*, pp. 481-2.

religion of the Chinese, or the wild Americans, or the civilized Hindus, and to discover, as well as we can, how even in these degraded forms of worship a spark of light lies hidden somewhere..."[6]

From that passage itself however the premise from which his tolerance springs will be evident: the premise that the others are blind and the proper Christian attitude towards them is pity, that the other religions are steps on the ascent of humanity to Christianity. He lists rites of countries from India to Malay to Fiji, and remarks, "No doubt these are revolting rites; but the phase of human thought which they disclose is far from being simply revolting. There is in these immolations, even in their most degraded form, a grain of that superhuman faith which we admire in the temptation of Abraham; and we feel that the time will come, nay, that it is coming, when the voice of the Angel of the Lord will reach those distant islands, and give a higher and better purpose to the wild ravings of their religion."[7]

That latter merit was quite the only thing that Max Muller could detect in these other religions. A "large number of Vedic hymns are childish in the extreme," Max Muller had written, "tedious, low, commonplace."[8] By the side of these "simple, natural, childish thoughts," he relented later, there were "many ideas which to us sound modern, or secondary and tertiary."[9] But all flashes of this kind in religions like Hinduism, Buddhism etc. had been, in Max Muller's view, mere glimpses of the truth which God had allowed man in the ascent to Christianity that He had ordained for man. Max

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[6] "Christ and other Masters," March 1858, in *Chips from a German Workshop, op. cit.*, Volume 1, pp. 49-60.

[7] *Ibid*, p. 59.

[8] *Chips from a German Workshop, op.cit.*, Volume I, p.26.

[9] *India: What it can teach us*, 1882, Longmans, London, 1919 edn., p.118.

Muller had spelled out the preparatory role of the other religions in his *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*:

> History seems to teach that the whole human race required a gradual education before, in the fullness of time, it could be admitted to the truths of Christianity. All the fallacies of human reason had to be exhausted, before the light of a higher truth could meet with ready acceptance. The ancient religions of the world were but the milk of nature, which was in due time to be succeeded by the bread of life... The religion of Buddha, has spread, far beyond the limits of the Aryan world, and, to our limited vision, it may seem to have retarded the advent of Christianity among a large portion of the human race. But in the sight of Him with whom a thousand years are but as one day, that religion, like the ancient religions of the world, may have but served to prepare the way of Christ, by helping, through its very errors to strengthen and to deepen the ineradicable yearning of the human heart after the truth of God.[10]

And so his faith brooked no dilution. "All I can say is that I have heard and read the worst that can be said against our religion — I mean the true original teaching of Christ," he writes to his wife in July 1862, "and I feel that I am ready in mind, if not in body, to lay down my life for the truth of his teaching. All our difficulties arise from the doctrine of men, not from his doctrine..."[11] Therefore, in spite of his disclaimer

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[10] Max Muller, *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, 1860, p. 32; recalled in, Bhagwad Dutt, *Western Indologists: A Study in Motives*, Itihas Prakashan, New Delhi, 1950(?), p. 5; Dutt's pioneering essay lists several hints of motives from the writings of several Indologists.

[11] *Life and Letters of the Rt. Hon. Fredrich Max Muller, op. cit.*, Volume 1, p. 266.

about the account of Genesis in the Bible quoted earlier, it is not entirely a surprise to learn from Goldstucker himself that in setting the date of the Rig Veda at only 1200 BC Max Muller was influenced by his belief that the world was created, as Christian cosmology has it, at 9 AM on 23 October, 4004 BC![12]

"India has been conquered once," Max Muller had written to the Duke of Argyll in December 1868 soon after the latter had been appointed Secretary of State for India. "But India must be conquered again, and that second conquest should be a conquest by education." The method he urged upon the Duke was different from that of Macaulay and Trevelyan. India cannot be anglicised, Max Muller wrote, contrary to what they had maintained, but it can be reinvigorated. For this he proposed that the vernaculars and classical languages of India be used to infuse western ideas. That would lead to a new national literature. "As to religion," he told the Duke, "that will take care of itself. The missionaries have done far more than they themselves seem to be aware of, nay, much of the work which is theirs they would probably disclaim." Given the state in which India was, there had to be adaptations of course: "The Christianity of our nineteenth century," he wrote, "will hardly be the Christianity of India." But he had no doubt about the outcome, none either about the responsibility that lay upon all of them together: "But the ancient religion is doomed," he concluded, "and if Christianity does not step in, whose fault will it be?"[13] This

[12] Cf, Navratna S. Rajaram, *Aryan Invasion of India, The Myth and the Truth*, Voice of India, 1993. Professor Rajaram works out the steps by which Max Muller probably got from 4004 B.C. to 1200 B.C., and recounts how, in the face of questions, Max Muller had eventually to disown the date he had ascribed. That disowning is seldom mentioned with the result that the date he put — 1200 B.C. — without *any* evidence whatsoever continues as the benchmark!

[13] *Life and Letters, op, cit.*, Volume I, pp.357-8.

was the theme to which he was to return again and again.

This strong faith, the task to which he thought every Christian was in duty bound, the manner in which all should go about that task, and his assessment of what the outcome was certain to be — all these come through vividly in the famous lecture "On Missions" which he delivered at the Westminster Abbey in December 1873. The notice for the lecture was accompanied by the hymn of Bishop Heber which, as we know, remained quite the anthem of Christian missionaries in India for a century:

From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strands,
Where Afric's sunny fountains,
Roll down their golden sands;
From many an ancient river,
From many a palmy plain,
They call us to deliver
their land from error's chain.
What though the spicy breezes
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle;
Though every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile!
In vain with lavish kindness
The gifts of God are strown;
The heathen in his blindness
Bows down to wood and stone.
Can we whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?
Salvation, O Salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,

Till earth's remotest nation
Has learnt Messiah's name.
Waft, waft, ye winds, his story;
And you, ye waters, roll;
Till, like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole;
Till o'er our ransomed nature,
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign. Amen.

Among the major religions of the world, Max Muller declared in his lecture, there are two kinds: those that have missionaries and the missionary spirit — Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam — and those that do not — Judaism, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism. The former are living and vibrant, the latter are dead and dying.

"As to our own religion," he told the Christian audience, "its very soul is missionary, progressive, world-embracing; it would cease to exist, if it disregarded the parting words of its Founder, 'Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things I have commanded; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'"

The exhortation is from *Matthew*, 28.19-20. The first thing of course is that had he been speaking about some religion other than Christianity, a scholar as diligent as Max Muller would surely have noted that the accounts of what happened after Jesus had been crucified and the things he is supposed to have said thereafter differ from Gospel to Gospel. In *Mark* (16.15-18) the words are, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He

that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands of the sick, and they shall recover." Not only are the words different, not only is it that missionaries did not quite proceed as if they believed the assurances — about picking up serpents, about drinking deadly things — but the words themselves are now acknowledged to have been added later on as in the earliest manuscripts Mark's Gospel finishes at 16.8. In *Luke* the words are even more at variance, the closest corresponding passages being *Luke*, 24.45-47: "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." *John* describes three occasions on which Jesus appears to his disciples after being crucified. But on none of the three occasions does Jesus say anything even remotely close to the missionary exhortation — though of course John adds in reference to the first occasion of Jesus' reappearance, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book," and he notes in regard to his account of Jesus' life taken as a whole, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (*John*, 20.30; 21.25).

But Max Muller does not pause to consider any of this. To him — no less than to a non-scholarly civil servant like Sir Richard Temple we encountered earlier — the exhortation to

preach and baptize all nations is conclusive. It becomes the hallmark of Christianity.

A person having been awakened to the truth just cannot but preach it, he cannot but exert to make others see the light, says Max Muller. "The spirit of truth is the life-spring of all religion," he told the audience, "and where it exists it must manifest itself, it must persuade, it must convince and convert... As long as there are doubt and darkness and anxiety in the soul of an inquirer, reticence may be his natural attitude. But when once doubt has yielded to certainty, darkness to light, anxiety to joy, the rays of truth will burst forth; and to close our hand or to shut our lips would be as impossible as for the petals of a flower to shut themselves against the summons of the sun of spring." Even if the spirit of truth does not, the spirit of love shall not let the person rest till he has persuaded and converted others. "It is this missionary character," he declared, "peculiar to these three religions, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity, which binds them together, and lifts them to a higher sphere."

The other religions "are dying or dead". In particular Hinduism. "That religion" he said, "is still professed by at least 110,000,000 of human souls, and, to judge from the last census, even that enormous number falls much short of the real truth. And yet I do not shrink from saying that their religion is dying or dead. And why? Because it cannot stand the light of day. The worship of Siva, of Vishnu, and the other popular deities, is of the same, nay, in many cases of a more degraded and savage character than the worship of Jupiter, Apollo, and Minerva; it belongs to a stratum of thought which is long buried beneath our feet: it may live on, like the lion and the tiger, but the mere air of free thought and civilized life will extinguish it. A religion may linger on for a long time, it may be accepted by the large masses of the

people, because it is there, and there is nothing better. But when a religion has ceased to produce defenders of the faith, prophets, champions, martyrs, it has ceased to live, in the true sense of the word; and in that sense the old, orthodox Brahmanism has ceased to live for more than a thousand years."

"It is true," he declared, "there are millions of children, women, and men in India who fall down before the stone image of Vishnu, with his four arms, riding on a creature half bird, half man, or sleeping on the serpent; who worship Siva, a monster with three eyes, riding naked on a bull, with a necklace of skulls for his ornament. There are human beings who still believe in a god of war, Kartikeya, with six faces, riding on a peacock, and holding bow and arrow in his hands; and who invoke a god of success, Ganesa, with four hands and an elephant's head, sitting on a rat. Nay, it is true that, in the broad daylight of the nineteenth century, the figure of the goddess Kali is carried through the streets of her own city, Calcutta, her wild disheveled hair reaching to her feet, with a necklace of human heads, her tongue protruded from her mouth, her girdle stained with blood. All this is true; but ask any Hindu who can read and write and think, whether these are the gods he believes in, and he will smile at your credulity. How long this living death of national religion in India may last, no one can tell: for our purposes, however, for gaining an idea of the issue of the great religious struggle of the future, that religion too is dead and gone."

So, religions like Hinduism which do not have missionaries and the missionary spirit are dead. But as the missionary spirit and as missionaries are there, not in one but in three religions, between them, Max Muller declared, "the decisive war for the dominion of the world will have to be fought."

And so, he said, even though they are perhaps most uncertain of all, we must study statistics pertaining to the number who adhere to each of these three religions, as "it is well to have a general conception of the forces of our enemies." He then set out the figures and remarked, "Between these three powers, then, the religious battle of the future, the Holy War of mankind, will have to be fought, and is being fought at the present moment, though apparently with little effect..."

He exhorted the audience not to be swayed by the argument that it cost too much to secure a convert overseas. He commended the contribution which "parental" missionary work was making — where children were taken when still very young, acculturated, and then sent back to their communities as seeds — a practice which, he noted, some had described as "religious kidnapping". Controversial missionary work — of converting through argument, of converting by controverting the falsehoods which the others believed — too had its place, though it was not liable to yield that great a harvest, as men, given their nature, were least persuaded by controversy.

But the most effective way of spreading Christianity was going to be the other kind, "and through which alone, I believe, the final victory will be gained." This was to abstain from all direct attempts at conversion, whether by force or by argument, but to know that our religion is on trial, that we are being watched. To lead, in other words, the sort of life that the best missionaries had led.

This is how, he said in a complete misreading of the course of Islam in India, Islam had benefited Hinduism: "It has cut into the very roots of idolatry, and has spread throughout India an intelligent and spiritual worship, which may at any time develop into a higher national creed." And that was exactly the sort of improvement which had started taking place as a result of the mere presence of Christianity

in India. He pointed to the new reformers: to Ram Mohun Roy — "a man so highly cultivated and so highly religious as he was, could not but feel humiliated at the spectacle which the popular religion of his country presented to his English friends"; to the Brahmo Samaj leader, Keshab Chandra Sen. And he drew attention to how these reformers had been persuaded by the new western scholarship to abandon their extravagant claims for the Vedas and their religion. "If we think of the future of India," he told the audience, "and of the influence which that country has always exercised on the East, the movement of religious reform which is now going on (the Brahmo Samaj, that is) appears to my mind the most momentous in this momentous century. If our missionaries feel constrained to repudiate it as their own work, history will be more just to them than they themselves. And if not as the work of Christian missionaries, it will be recognized hereafter as the work of those missionary Christians who have lived in India, as examples of a true Christian life..."

His counsel therefore was to live the life of truth and love: "If Christianity is to retain its hold on Europe and America," he said in conclusion, "if it is to conquer in the Holy War of the future, it must throw off its heavy armor, the helmet of brass and the coat of mail, and face the world like David, with his staff, his stones, and his sling. We want less of creeds, but more of trust; less of ceremony, but more of work; less of solemnity, but more of genial honesty; less of doctrine, but more of love."[14]

What strikes us today is the zeal that this academic, objective scholar had for Christianity: the "Holy War", the "decisive war for the dominion of the world", and the rest. The missionaries however were not struck only by that: for they

[14] For all this see, "Westminster Lecture on Missions," December 1873, in *Chips from a German Workshop, op. cit.*, Volume IV, pp. 238-78.

detected in addition sharp censure of what they were doing, of the kind of life they were leading, of the kind of establishment the Church had become. They attacked these suggestions in his lecture with considerable force. There were rumours that some legal action too was being contemplated. The criticisms gave Max Muller the occasion to reaffirm his faith in Christianity, to restate his belief in its final triumph, and to re-emphasise the extremely high value he put on missionary work. The missionary impulse in the three living religions — Christianity, Islam, Buddhism — is of their very essence, he declared once again: "It is the spirit of truth in the hearts of believers which cannot rest unless it manifests itself in thought, word, and deed, which is not satisfied till it has carried its message to every human soul, till what it believes to be the truth is accepted as the truth by all members of the human family." It is what has marked Christianity from the time "when as yet it counted no more than twelve apostles, and which lays on every one that calls himself a Christian the duty of avowing his convictions, whatever they may be, and gaining others to embrace the truth. In that sense every true Christian is a missionary."

As for Hinduism, it was indeed dead, he reiterated. The word — dead — was too strong, he said, conceding to conquer, at all events it was liable to be misunderstood. But for all practical purposes, dead Hinduism was: "What I meant to say was that the popular worship of Siva and Vishnu belongs to the same intellectual stratum as the worship of Jupiter and Apollo, that it is an anachronism in the nineteenth century, and that, for our purposes, for prognosticating the issues of the religious struggles of the future, it may simply be set aside. For settling any of the questions that may be said to be pending between Christianity, Mohammedanism, and Buddhism, Brahaminism is dead. For converting any number of

Christians, Mohammedans, and Buddhists back to idolworship, Brahmanism is dead. It may absorb Sonthals, and Gonds, and Bhils and other half savage races, with their rough-hewn jungle deities, it may even raise them to a higher stage of civilization, and imbue them with the first principles of a truer faith and a purer worship, but for carrying any of the strong positions of Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity, Brahmanism is powerless and dead. In India itself, where it clings to the soil with a thousand roots, it was beaten by Buddhism, and, if it afterwards recovered its position, that was due to physical force, not to persuasion and conversion. The struggle between Mohammedanism and Brahmanism in India was on both sides a political rather than a religious struggle: still when a change of religion arose from conviction, we see Brahmanism yielding to the purer light of Islam, not Islam to Brahmanism."

Of course, something new may arise from within it. Indeed it has arisen — Brahmoism — as a consequence of the contact with Christianity. And a new prophet has actually arisen — presumably Keshab Chandra Sen. But this new creed is the very opposite of orthodox Brahmanism. And its inspiration is clear: "...though Christian missionaries might not wish to recognise Brahmoism as their work, it was the work of those missionary Christians who lived in India as examples of a true Christian life...," he wrote again.

Concluding, he reiterated his conviction that "I know of no nobler life than that of a true missionary. I tried to defend (in the original lecture) the labors of the paternal missionary against disparaging criticisms. I tried to account for the small success of controversial missions, by showing how little is gained by mere argument and casuistry at home. And I pointed to the indirect missionary influence, exercised by every man who leads a Christian life in India or elsewhere,

as the most encouraging sign of the final triumph of a pure and living Christianity."[15]

And the work of scholars was a strong reinforcement to the work missionaries were doing. In his Opening Address to the International Congress of Orientalists, Max Muller returned to the theme: as a result of the work of Indologists, he stressed, "a more intelligent appreciation of their real merits has taken the place of the extravagant admiration (of the reformist Indians) for the master works of their old poets"; he stressed how it was by the work of these scholars that the reformist movement, tending as it was to ascribing to the Vedas the authority of Divine Revelation, had been "stopped, and turned into a new channel."

And he proposed even closer cooperation, indeed fusion of the work of Missionary Societies and these scholars. "I have lately incurred very severe obloquy for my supposed hostility to missionary enterprise," he said. "All I can say is, I wish that there were ten missionaries for every one we have now. I have always counted missionaries among my best friends; I have again and again acknowledged how much Oriental studies and linguistic studies in general, owe to them and I am proud to say that, even now, while missionaries at home have abused me in unmeasured language, missionaries abroad, devoted, hard-working missionaries, have thanked me for what I said of them and their work in my lay-sermon in Westminster Abbey last December." He spelt out the way for collaboration:

> Now it seems to me that, first of all, our Universities, and I think again chiefly of Oxford, might do much more for missions than they do at present. If we had a

[15] On all this see, "On the Vitality of Brahmanism," in *Chips from a German Workshop, op. cit.*, Volume IV, pp. 296-316.

sufficient staff of professors for Eastern languages, we could prepare young missionaries for their work, and should be able to send out from time to time such men as Patteson, the Bishop of Melanesia, who was every inch an Oxford man. And in these missionaries we might have not only apostles of religion and civilization, but at the same time, the most valuable pioneers of scientific research. I know there are some authorities at home who declare that such a combination is impossible, or at least undesirable; that a man cannot serve two masters, and that a missionary must do his own work and nothing else. Nothing, I believe, can be more mistaken. First of all, some of our most efficient missionaries have been those who have done also the most excellent work as scholars, and whenever I have conversed on this subject with missionaries who have seen active service, they all agree that they cannot be converting all day long, and that nothing is more refreshing and invigorating to them than some literary or scientific work. Now what I should like to see is this: I should like to see ten or twenty of our non-resident fellowships, which at present are doing more harm than good, assigned to missionary work, to be given to young men who have taken their degree, and who, whether laymen or clergymen, are willing to work as assistant missionaries on distant stations, with the distinct understanding that they should devote some of their time to scientific work, whether the study of languages, or flowers, or stars, and that they should send home every year some account of their labors. These men would be like scientific consuls, to whom students at home might apply for information and help. They would have opportunities of distinguishing themselves

> by really useful work, far more than in London, and after ten years, they might either return to Europe with a well-established reputation, or if they find that they have a real call for missionary work, devote all their life to it. Though to my own mind there is no nobler work than that of a missionary, yet I believe that some such connection with the Universities and men of science would raise their position, and would call out more general interest, and secure to the missionary cause the good-will of those whose will is apt to become law.[16]

Do his pronouncements on Hinduism — its "revolting rites", "it belongs to a stratum of thought which is long buried beneath our feet," "this living-death of national religion in India," the scorn for the deities the Hindus were worshiping — do such remarks indicate that Max Muller was following his own counsel — of looking at the other man's religion through the eyes of a believer?

Now, there is no denying the scholarship of Max Muller: his output alone was prodigious. But, as we see, there is no denying his commitment to Christianity either, no denying his hope and expectation about the ultimate, indeed imminent triumph of Christianity, no denying his conviction that every Christian was in duty bound to put his shoulder to winning the "Holy War"; no denying that he looked upon scholarly and missionary work as a joint undertaking for attaining the same goal — the goal of ensuring that Christianity acquires dominion over the world.

No denying either that, while his scholarship was great, his powers for prognosis were not: Hinduism has not died as swiftly as he was certain it was going to do!

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[16] "Opening Address," *op. cit.*, pp.337-8.

*Another example*

Or take Monier-Williams. Then the Boden Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Oxford, his accounts of our philosophy, our beliefs and practices, his Sanskrit-English dictionary are in use to this day. His acquaintance with India had led him to appreciate much about its culture and philosophy, and he lectured missionaries and others back in England that such a people could not be dismissed as uncivilised. And he felt that Macaulay, Trevelyan and Bentinck had gone overboard, that Bentinck's order had tilted too far in favour of western learning. He exhorted Englishmen to learn more about India, to be more sensitive — for instance in their insistence on eating beef — to the sensibilities of Indians. He felt, and said, that James Mill had done great injustice to Indians, and inflicted much harm on British interests by blackening Indian character and thereby sowing deep prejudices in the minds of Britishers who were being sent over to govern India. But even in such a person was there the slightest doubt or ambiguity about the objective? Or about what constituted the obstacles to that objective being attained?

"For what purpose, then, has this enormous territory been committed to England?," he asked in his *Modern India and the Indians* published in 1878. "Not to be the '*corpus vile*' of political, social, or military experiments; not for the benefit of our commerce, or the increase of our wealth — but that every man, woman and child, from Cape Comorin to the Himalaya mountains, may be elevated, enlightened, Christianised."

The chief obstacle to the spread of Christianity in India, he told the Missionary Congress held at Oxford on 2 May 1877, is that these people are proud of their tradition and religion. They hold, he wrote, that everything of theirs —

their language, script, grammar, scriptures, legal code, the order of castes, down to their marriages — has been given to them by the Deity. More troublesome is the fact that "The very point on which we think the Hindus most mistaken is the very point in which they pride themselves most of all" — namely, in "their false ideas of the Supreme Being."

But an obstacle greater than even their pride in their religion, he declared, was the very nature of that religion. "For pantheism is a most subtle, plausible, and all-embracing system, which may profess to include Christianity itself as one of the phenomena of the universe. An eminent Hindu is reported to have said, 'We Hindus have no need of conversion; we are Christians and more than Christians already.'" "In short, it is the old story," he continued. "Pride and self-complacency are the chief obstacles to the entrance of truth into the human mind. We go to the Hindus with a true revelation and the good news of God's love and good-will towards them in becoming incarnate for their sakes, and we find that they claim to have possessed a true revelation of their own, and a more excellent way of salvation suited to themselves, long before Europe had any revealed religion at all." He urged the British to study the texts of the religion in the original Sanskrit, to avoid making light of Hinduism with sweeping expressions such as "heathenism" and "idolatry", he warned them against underestimating "its comprehensiveness, its receptivity, its subtle compromising spirit, its recuperative hydra-like vitality." To compound the difficulties, he explained, there are the Hindus themselves — with "their peculiar mental constitution, their incapability of appreciating historical facts, their appetite for wild legends and monstrous exaggerations, their natural dislike to the doctrine of sanctification as the only evidence of regeneration..."

He urged his compatriots to shed their own pride in their

race, in their knowledge, even in their religion as these were hindering the spread of Christianity. "Young and enthusiastic missionaries," he counselled, "must not be surprised, nor must we in England blame them, if they are forced to imitate St. Paul — to become Muslims to the Muslims, Hindus to the Hindus (without, however, giving up one iota of the truth which they themselves hold), in order that both Muslims and Hindus may be won over to Christ."

There are elements in these other religions which accord with the truths which have been best realised in Christianity, Monier-Williams wrote — actually this proves the divine origin of Christianity: "And is it not a proof of the Divine origin of Christianity, and its adaptation to humanity in every quarter of the globe," Monier-Williams asked, "that some of its grandest and most essential dogmas, and, so to speak, its root-ideas, do indeed lie at the root of all religions, and explain the problems of life which sages and philosophers in all ages of the world have vainly attempted to solve?"

And it is these common elements — "They are nearly all to be found in Hinduism, like portions of adamantine granite beneath piles of shifting sedimentary strata" — which, Monier-Williams counselled, "ought to be eagerly searched for by the missionary as a basis for his own superstructure."

He was opposed to the Macaulay-Trevelyan-Bentinck policies which shoved away Indian languages and the old subsisting culture. He wanted these to be studied, improved and built upon. The object was not of course just to elevate the charges that Almighty had placed in the custody of the British. The course he was counselling, he argued, was the best way to ensure that the people would voluntarily come to Christ: "We require to raise up a whole generation — perhaps two or three generations — of really educated men," he wrote, " — men, not only instructed in scientific truth, but well imbued with moral

and religious truth — with the spirit, if not with the letter of Christian teaching — and with European views on all social subjects. And to this end, we have not to denationalize the men of India: we have to strengthen and consolidate their nationality. We have not to extinguish their own civilization: we have to refine and elevate it, we have not to sweep away their social institutions: we have to shape and mould them according to a higher pattern. We have not to erase every feature of their moral code: we have to expunge the bad and retain the good. We have not even to exterminate their religions: we have only to lay the axe to every root and fibre of error, and, after eradicating the false, to engraft the essential doctrines of Christianity on pre-existing germs of truth."

"But how is this previous process of elevating and Christianizing the men to be effected ?," he asked. "We must begin with the schools..." We have rightly "abstained from imitating the conquering Musalman — from enforcing our religion by Government influence and authority." We should instead focus on instructing the men on the principles of true morality which are found even in their religions: "Even some essential threads of Christian doctrine... are there, and ought to be thankfully made use of, while every cross thread of falsehood, superstition, and fatuous delusion is ruthlessly torn away.... We should collect their best moral, social and religious precepts, separating them from everything false. We should teach them in conjunction with scientific truth in our Government schools. In this way we shall best prepare our Indian school-boys for a voluntary acceptance of Christian truth when their judgements are matured."

And he was clear as clear can be about the main fortress which had to be breached. On comparing Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam with Christianity, Monier-Williams of course found that Christianity was the only true religion. Islam was still a

proselytising religion, he wrote, and therefore Christians must wake up to the danger it represented. The advantage was theirs for "of no other religion can it be affirmed so emphatically as of Christianity that the missionary spirit is of its innermost essence; for Christ — Who is the Life and Soul of Christianity — was Himself a missionary..." Moreover, Christianity had many more points of contact with the ancient faith than Islam. As for Buddhism, it was a missionary religion to begin with, Monier-Williams recalled, "Hence its rapid progress. Hence it spread as no other false system has ever spread before or since." But its missionary zeal had long since departed. It could no longer meet the religious needs of the people. The conclusion? "Take away Brahminism, and they cannot again become Buddhists. They must become Christians, Muslims or Theists."

Brahminism must die — for the Brahmins curtail access to their scriptures. Moreover, "In point of fact false ideas on the most ordinary scientific subjects are so mixed up with its doctrines that the commonest education — the simplest lessons in geography — without the aid of Christianity, must inevitably in the end sap its foundations."

"...And," concluded Monier-Williams, "when the walls of the mighty fortress of Brahminism are encircled, undermined, and finally stormed by the soldiers of the Cross, the victory of Christianity must be signal and complete."

The clear objective. A specific strategy. The one commanding fortress to "encircle, undermine, and finally storm" — Brahminism.

And, note, this is the outlook of an academic, of an Indologist, in fact of one among these who is comparatively appreciative of India and its civilization. And he is the scholar whose books to this day — a hundred years after they were written — are still the source of information for so many of us — Indians and Hindus included — about

India, and Hinduism !

Professor Monier-Williams had succeeded Professor H.H. Wilson, whom we shall soon encounter, to the Boden Chair of Sanskrit at Oxford University. He had spent a large part of his tenure in philological work — in particular in preparing the classic *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. Colleagues and others criticised him for having spent so much of his tenure in work of this kind, and for not having done more of the "scholarly" work. Max Muller's contrary example was at hand. Monier-Williams was stung by the barbs, and turned to meet this criticism in the Preface to his great work, the *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. Notice what he says about the object for which the Boden Chair at Oxford was set up by Colonel Boden — "to promote the translation of Scriptures (that is, Christian Scriptures) into Sanskrit, so as to enable his countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian religion." Notice how he justifies his labour in preparing the *Dictionary* — that it will now enable his countrymen to translate the Christian Scriptures into Sanskrit. Notice how he justifies his work by drawing attention to the very first lecture he had given upon his appointment to the Chair, the lecture entitled, "The Study of Sanskrit in Relation to Missionary Work in India." The point is not at all that Monier-Williams was evil-intentioned or diabolical. But that while in his diligence and scholarship he was exceptional, in his premises and fundamental beliefs, in his hopes, in what he regarded as the ultimate aim he was typical.

Here then is Professor Monier-Williams towards the end of his tenure as the Boden Professor at Oxford:

> With regard to a strictly personal criticism in which I have for many years been content to acquiesce without comment, I may perhaps advantageously — now that I have

nearly arrived at the end of my career — make a brief explanation. Some of my critics and a few candid friends have expressed surprise that I should have devoted so much of my long tenure of the Boden Professorship to the dry, dreary and thankless drudgery of writing Dictionaries and Grammars, and to the practical researches carried on among the Pundits of India in their own country, rather than to the duty of proving the profundity of my learning and my fitness to occupy a high Professional position by editing or translating obscure Sanskrit texts which have never been edited or translated before.

In explanation I must draw attention to the fact that I am only the second occupant of the Boden Chair, and that its founder, Colonel Boden stated most explicitly in his will (dated August 15, 1811 A.D.) that the special object of his munificent bequest was to promote the translation of Scriptures into Sanskrit, so as to enable his countrymen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian Religion.

It was on this account, when my distinguished predecessor and teacher, Professor H.H. Wilson, was a candidate for the Chair in 1832, his lexicographical labours were put forward as his principal claim to election.

Surely then it need not be thought surprising, if following in the footsteps of my venerated master, I have made it the chief aim of my professional life to provide facilities for the translation of our sacred Scriptures into Sanskrit, and for the promotion of a better knowledge of the religions and customs of India, as the best key to the knowledge of the religious needs of our great Eastern Dependency. My very first public lecture delivered after my election in 1860 was on 'The Study of Sanskrit in Relation to Missionary Work in India'

(published in 1861).[17]

Remember again that the example transcends the individual scholar: even more important than the fact that, on his own telling, these were the impulses that propelled the work of this major scholar is the fact that he thought that this is the sort of justification which would carry conviction. The passages therefore testify to the intellectual climate of the day.

*The point to note*

Now, the point is not that just because these were the objectives and inspirations of these scholars all their work is either wrong or without worth. It would be foolish to assume that. The point is seen by transposing the question. If a Hindu scholar had these aims, if he held to them with the fervour of say Max Muller, would secularists not warn us to look askance at whatever he wrote ? But in the case of these scholars ?

This missionary-scholarship, or scholarship inspired by the missionary impulse, has been even more lethal than the calumny we noted earlier. Its effects have lasted through the century, and they have reached matters far afield. A number of the notions which colour our minds to this day can be traced to the seeds that were sown by that scholarship: that the white Aryans massacred and drove away the dark-skinned Dravids, that India is not a nation but a heap, a zoo of different nationalities.... As has by now been shown repeatedly, there was not the slightest evidence for the notions, on the contrary all the evidence pointed the other way. Moreover, the ones who put the notions in circulation did so,

[17] Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1899, Preface, pp. 9-10.

in many cases, with specific objectives — of undermining the regard of the people for their own culture, of pitting sections of them against other sections.

Yet the results of their scholarship have been so thoroughly internalised by us, so deeply have they got imbedded in our discourse, so potent is the divisive politics that swirls around them that today to show these notions up — as having been put forth without any evidence, as being contrary to the evidence which has come to light in the last century, as having been put forth for the specific and conscious purpose of dividing and undermining India — to do so is denounced as chauvinism and communalism! Imagine how our intellectuals would react if they came across an Indian or Hindu scholar maintaining that the over-riding objective of his work was, and that of every colleague's work must be to ensure that Hinduism win the Holy War between the religions, that its dominion be established the world over, if he maintained that the work of scholars and of Hindu missionaries was the same — the intellectuals would be up in arms. They would not just bury the man in a heap of denunciation, they would thenceforth refuse to read anything the man might write!

That these notions remain so lethal to this day is not of course the doing of the missionaries or of those scholars: the principal responsibility for that lies with Indian intellectuals. But while one lens of the spectacles of these intellectuals has been fabricated, as the example just given shows, by the Marxists and "secularists", the other one, the original one, the one which was fabricated at a time when only a monocole was worn, that one was certainly fabricated by that missionary-imperialist scholarship.

# 8

# Creating vacuums, filling them

Several things strike one as one reads the writings and speeches of those days. First of course there is the candour: political power is what induced it — there was no reason to be circumlocutory, there was no fear that any one of consequence would take offence as no one else was of much consequence. The second thing is that in spite of the incessant frequency and explicitness with which all concerned spelled out their objectives and stratagems, these are no where in our collective awareness.

The third thing strikes one as forcefully, and that is how widely the premises, the arguments and "facts", as well as how widely expectations about the outcome were shared.

That every Christian — that each one of them personally — was in duty bound to assist in spreading Christianity:

> "...as the Christian religion is the only one capable of correcting the disorders caused by the passions of mankind, and of gradually leading on the world to a state of perfection, it must be of divine origin, and we are bound to promote its universal diffusion in obedience to its founder, Jesus Christ..."
>
> — *Charles Trevelyan*

"And I ask you, my brother Christians, whether of all the commands which He issued to us, there is any command more explicit than this, that we preach the Gospel to all the world ? If you believe in the Bible, if you are resolved to obey its ennobling dictates, then I ask you whether you are not bound, collectively and individually, to do your utmost to spread over the world, into its very utmost regions and among its most degraded tribes and classes, that light which emanated from Palestine ?"

— *Richard Temple*

"As to our own religion, its very soul is missionary, progressive, world-embracing: it would cease to exist if it disregarded the parting words of its founder: 'Go ye therefore and teach all nations...' " The missionary spirit is what has marked Christianity from the time "when as yet it counted no more than twelve apostles, and which lays on every one that calls himself a Christian the duty of avowing his convictions, whatever they may be, and gaining others to embrace the truth. In that sense every true Christian is a missionary."

— *Max Muller*

"...Of no other religion can it be affirmed so emphatically as of Christianity that the missionary spirit is of its inner most essence; for Christ — who is the Life and Soul of Christianity — was Himself a missionary..."

— *Monier-Williams*

That this is specially so in the case of a country like India: Providence has placed the empire in our hands so that we spread Christianity in these benighted lands:

"...I ask you, do you believe that the Providence which permits us to do this (to bring one country after another under the sway of British arms) allows it merely for our national, our temporal, our secular aggrandisement? Can you believe it is permitted for any purpose but one — namely, the ultimate spread of the enlightenment of truth? And, as Christians, we believe that all ultimate truth must consist in religious truth..."

— *Richard Temple*

"For what purpose then has this enormous territory been committed to England? Not to be the '*corpus vile*' of political, social, or military experiments; not for the benefit of our commerce, or the increase of our wealth — but that every man, woman and child, from Cape Comorin to the Himalaya mountains, may be elevated, enlightened, Christianised."

— *Monier-Williams*

That the Hindus are debased and immoral in the extreme, and that they are so because their deities are debased and immoral. This abominable religion cannot withstand scrutiny, so intertwined are its fundamentals with error and falsehood:

"Every young Brahmin... who learns geography in our colleges, learns to smile at the Hindu mythology..."

— *T.B. Macaulay*

"The Grammar and spelling book suffice to destroy the Hindu religion..." "It is so destitute of any thing like evidence, and is identified with so many gross immoralities and absurdities, that it gives way at once before the light of European science..." "...It is sufficient to prove that the

word does not rest on the back of a tortoise, or is not composed of concentric circles of wine and cake and milk, and so forth, and their religion is gone..."

— *Charles Trevelyan*

"In point of fact false ideas on the most ordinary scientific subjects are so mixed up with its doctrines that the commonest education — the simplest lessons in geography — without the aid of Christianity, must inevitably in the end sap its foundations."

— *Monier-Williams*

Fortunately for all, specially for the Hindus, Hinduism is doomed, it is dying, it is dead, it is no longer the religion of Hindus who have received education:

"A generation is growing up which repudiates idols. A young Hindu, who had received a liberal English education, was forced by his family to attend the shrine of Kali, upon which he took off his cap to 'Madam Kali', made her a low bow, and hoped 'her ladyship was well'..."

— *Charles Trevelyan*

"Hinduism is gradually breaking up, like the clouds before the rising sun... Hinduism is still the religion of the million, but only of the uneducated million. It is no longer the religion of the educated Hindu. It is no longer the religion of those who have either theoretical enlightenment or practical knowledge. It is being gradually dissipated, like the mist, before the science of the nineteenth century — that science which is being freely distributed amongst the people through the

agency of Government..."

— *Richard Temple*

"But the ancient religion is doomed, and if Christianity does not step in, whose fault will it be?" "That religion (Hinduism) is still professed by at least 110,000,000 of human souls... and yet I do not shrink from saying that their religion is dying or dead. And why? Because it cannot stand the light of day.... The worship of Siva, of Vishnu, and the other popular deities... belongs to a stratum of thought which is long buried beneath our feet: it may live on, like the lion and the tiger, but the mere air of free thought and civilised life will extinguish it... ask any Hindu who can read and write and think, whether these are the gods he believes in, and he will smile at your credulity..."

— *Max Muller*

Accordingly, and because of what they saw as the great successes of the missionaries, they were confident that India would fall to Christianity soon. The great secession from Hinduism had already begun... a new prophet who was preparing them for Christianity had already arisen. Even on this little detail — their faith in the Brahmo Samaj — they were of one mind:

"...Multitudes, quite outside the missionary communities, have accepted Christianity in principle.... No doubt you have heard of Ram Mohun Rai, Dwarkanath Thakur, and Keshab Chandar Sen, the leaders of a vast secession from Hinduism, which has already advanced more than halfway to Christianity..."

— *Charles Trevelyan*

"...many of them (the Brahmo Samaj leaders) are almost persuaded to be Christians. Some of their ministers actually preach sermons from texts taken from the Bible, and they have declared that the British government may be the secular ruler of England, but the supreme ruler is no less than Christ the Lord..."

— *Richard Temple*

"...When I hinted that this ('really gifted and singularly powerful') prophet had actually arisen, and that in Brahmoism, as preached by Ram Mohun Roy, Debendranath Tagore, and Keshab Chandar Sen, we ought to recognise a transition from Brahminism to a purer faith... I am not given to prophecy, but though I am no longer young, I still hold to a belief that a cause upheld with such honesty of purpose, purity and unselfishness as Brahmoism has been, must and will meet with ultimate success..."

— *Max Muller*

What was just confidence in the case of civilians like Trevelyan and scholars like Max Muller blossomed into active collaboration in the case of the missionaries: incensed at the attention Swami Vivekananda was attracting in the U.S., the missionaries set an Indian on his heels — to denounce him, to defame him in the vilest terms. He was among the principal torch-bearers of the "new prophet" — Keshab Chandra Sen!

The same objective. The agreed upon strategy. The same hopes. The identical expectation. The division of labour.

The main consequence of the joint endeavours — of the rulers, the missionaries and the scholars — was not so much to enlarge the flock of the Church — in that the soldiers of

the Cross did not meet with the success all had forecast in the Nineteenth century. The main consequences were threefold: such infrastructure — from schools, to industry, to irrigation tanks, to temples and the rest — which had survived Muslim rule was laid waste, a vacuum was thus created; this vacuum was then filled by the British — as an act of benevolence, as an act of doing one's duty of elevating and civilising the charges Providence had placed in their care; the stuff with which this vacuum was filled in turn had two further consequences: it wholly undermined the sense of oneness among the people, and it wholly undermined in them respect for their own traditions.

The Select Committee hearings we have been following give several glimpses of the ways by which these consequences came about. Two brief examples will suffice — they deal with two matters for which missionaries in particular and the British in general are given great credit: providing education, and providing a *lingua franca,* English.

As will be recalled, to begin with the East India Company had forbidden the missionaries from operating in the territories that were falling into the Company's hands. By 1813 a great tussle was on with missionaries painting India in the most lurid colours to establish the point that it urgently needed to be saved. That these were concoctions of the worst kind can be glimpsed from what a British lawyer who had spent several years in Madras, stated in evidence about the condition of India at that time: "Indeed, when I turn my eyes either to the present condition or ancient grandeur of that country; when I contemplate the magnificence of her structures, her spacious reservoirs, constructed at an immense expense, pouring fertility and plenty over the land, the monuments of a benevolence expanding its cares over remote ages; when I survey the solid and embellished archi-

tecture of her temples, the elaborate and exquisite skill of her manufactures and fabrics, her literature sacred and profane, her gaudy and enameled pottery on which a wile and prodigal fancy has lavished all its opulence; when I turn to the philosophers, lawyers and moralists who have left the oracles of political and ethical wisdom to restrain the passions and to awe the vices which disturb the commonwealth; when I look at the peaceful and harmonious alliances of families, guarded and secured by the household virtues; when I see amongst a cheerful and well-ordered society, the benignant and softening influence of religion and morality, a system of manners founded on a mild and polished obeisance, and preserving the surface of social life smooth and unruffled — I cannot hear without surprise, mingled with horror, of sending out Baptists and Anabaptists to civilize or convert such a people at the hazard of disturbing or deforming institutions which appear to have hitherto been the means ordained by Providence of making them virtuous and happy."[1]

*Schools are choked off*

The missionaries won of course. As time passed and they began to establish schools, they began painting India as a land that was bereft of education, of schools, a land whose people were steeped in darkest ignorance. Yet, that is not how things had been, and nationalists — Swami Vivekananda, Gandhiji, Lala Lajpat Rai, Pandit Sunderlal — drew pointed attention to what had been, and to what the country had been reduced to: it was not that there had been a vacuum which the missionaries were filling in; the vacuum

[1] See, P. Thomas, *Christians and Christianity in India and Pakistan*, pp. 179-80; and *British Paramountcy and Indian Rennaisance*, Part II, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1965, p. 152.

had been created by that other half of the operation — by the ruin of economic activity — which the British State and commercial interests had engineered, and now the second limb of the triad — the missionaries — were stepping in to fill it. Writing his historic, *Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj*, in 1920 Pandit Sunderlal recalled the famous British Parliamentarian Keir Hardie observing in his *India*: "Max Muller, on the strength of official documents and a missionary report concerning education in Bengal prior to the British occupation, asserts that there were then 80,000 native schools in Bengal, or one for every 400 of the population. Ludlow, in his *History of British India* says that in every Hindoo village which has retained its old form I am assured that the children generally are able to read, write, and cipher, but where we have swept away the village system as in Bengal there the village school has also disappeared."

Pandit Sunderlal recalled from the proceedings of the Select Committee what the British Collector of Bellary, A.D. Campbell, had written in his report in 1823: "The economy with which children are taught to write in the native schools and the system by which the more advanced scholars are caused to teach the less advanced, and at the same time to confirm their own knowledge," the Collector had written, "is certainly admirable, and well deserved the imitation it has received in England...."

But now, the Collector had lamented, "...there are multitudes who cannot even avail themselves of the advantage of the system..."

"I am sorry to state," he had explained, "that this is ascribable to the gradual but general impoverishment of the country. The means of the manufacturing classes have been of late years greatly diminished by the introduction of our own English manufactures in lieu of the Indian cotton fabrics. The

removal of many of our troops from our own territories to the distant frontiers of our newly subsidized allies has also, of late years affected the demand for grain; the transfer of the capital of the country from the native government and their officers, who liberally expended it in India, to Europeans, restricted by law from employing it even temporarily in India, and daily draining it from the land, has likewise tended to this effect, which has not been alleviated by a less rigid enforcement of the revenue due to the State. The greater part of the middling and lower classes of the people are now unable to defray the expenses incident upon the education of their offspring, while their necessities require the assistance of their children as soon as their tender limbs are capable of the smallest labour."

"...of nearly a million of souls in this District," the Collector reported, "not 7,000 are now at school, a proportion which exhibits but too strongly the result above stated. In many villages where formerly there were large schools, there are now none, and in many others where there were large schools, now only a few children of the most opulent are taught, others being unable from poverty to attend..."

"Such is the state in this District of the various schools in which reading, writing and arithmetic are taught in the vernacular dialects of the country, as has been always usual in India....." he wrote, adding, "learning,.... has never flourished in any country except under the encouragement of the ruling power, and the countenance and support once given to science in this part of India has long been withheld."

"Of the 533 institutions for education now existing in this District, I am ashamed to say, not one now derives any support from the State....," he narrated. "There is no doubt, that in former times, especially under the Hindoo Governments very large grants, both in money and in land, were issued for

the support of learning....."

What the missionaries were soon to urge in the case of temples like Jagannath Puri had already been put into effect in the case of centres of learning. The Collector reported: ".....considerable alienations of revenue, which formerly did honour to the State by upholding and encouraging learning, have deteriorated under our rule into the means of supporting ignorance; whilst science, deserted by the powerful aid she formerly received from Government, has often been reduced to beg her scanty and uncertain meal from the chance benevolence of charitable individuals; and it would be difficult to point out any period in the history of India when she stood more in need....."[2]

But ignorant and illiterate India was pronounced to be, and so naturally missionary and Government schools had to be set up to rescue the natives.

### *What unified us is erased*

What was done to, or happened to schools and education is exactly what was done to, or happened to other aspects of life, and polity and society. Today we are taught to be grateful to the British, to the missionary institutions in particular, for educating us in English so that at least the ruling sections in different parts of the country can communicate with each other. Had it not been for them, we are taught, we would not have been able to conduct even elementary administration and discourse at a country-wide level. As much as the railways, which also but for British rule we would presumably not have had, it is English which has

[2] Report of A.D. Campbell, Collector of Bellary, dated 17 August, 1823; c.f., Sunderlal, *Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj*, Publications Division, 1970 reprint, Volume II, pp. 682-703.

lifted us into being a country.

A small example from the Select Committee hearings which we have been following will help show how much weight we need put in such claims.

Horace Hayman Wilson was one of the most knowledgeable witnesses the Select Committee examined. He was at the time Professor at Oxford and the Oriental Visitor at Haileybury, the College at which persons being sent to administer India were trained. He had been member and Secretary of the Committee of Public Instruction, and had been closely associated with the Sanskrit and Mohammedan Colleges which the Government had set up at Calcutta. His books are in use to this day.

He too was opposed to the Macaulay-Trevelyan-Bentinck policy. He urged much greater attention to Sanskrit. And he emphatically refuted the allegation that the native literature was worthless. In place of the policies which were being pursued, he proposed that the learned classes be educated through the classical languages — specially Sanskrit — and by using in the first instance books which the people revered, and that through these learned classes the general mass of the people be imparted knowledge which would be useful in their daily lives. The alternate course, he argued, was neither practical nor desirable: we have neither the teachers who can instruct from books in English nor translations of those books into the languages which the teachers know, he argued: moreover, exclusive emphasis on English and western learning would produce "extensive dissatisfaction".

But the object of even such a scholar was of course not very different: explaining the reason for writing his book *The Religious and Philosophical System of the Hindus*, he noted, "These lectures were written to help candidates for a prize of Pound Sterling 200/- given by John Muir, a well-known old

Haileybury man and great Sanskrit scholar, for the best refutation of the Hindu Religious System." He now urged Parliament's *Select Committee on Indian Territories*: you have to approach the natives through persons they respect and these are not persons who are well-versed in western books and lore, but those who are learned in Sanskrit and Arabic; it is through these persons therefore that you must reach the common folk; in the meantime of course, by following the course advocated, you would have reoriented these learned classes. Asked to weigh the conveying of useful knowledge through a person who had been schooled in Sanskrit and another who had been schooled in English, Wilson observed, "The value of the knowledge is a different thing; of course it is not intended (in the scheme he was proposing) to leave the students of the Sanscrit College or the Madressa unacquainted with English. At Benares they are taught both. The question is, which is the most powerful instrument of operating upon the people; giving them useful knowledge through the medium of translations, or letting them study English, so as to acquire that useful knowledge in that way. A mere English scholar is not respected for his learning by the natives; they have no notion of English as learning, but they have a high respect for a man who knows Sanscrit, or who knows Arabic; and if with that knowledge he combines the possession of real science, such as can be conveyed to him through English works alone, then the natives will listen to him, and benefit by his instructions, but they will not pay any attention to a mere English scholar as their instructor."[3]

"The substance of your evidence," the Committee asked, "is that you think more attention should be paid to obtaining

[3] *Select Committee on Indian Territories*, Minutes of Evidence taken on 18 July, 1853, p. 7.

a class of well-educated schoolmasters, and that Sanscrit for that purpose should be made the basis of their instruction?" "Yes", replied Wilson.

"Your evidence extends rather to the education of masters than to the modes of teaching the natives in the Mofussil ?," the Committee enquired. "That is not the sole object, nor perhaps the most important object," Wilson explained. "We want to have at our command a well educated class of natives from among those who are considered by their countrymen as learned; it is not that I want to make schoolmasters of the Pundits of the colleges, but if we send into the country a number of men possessing the greatest influence among their countrymen, even men possessing the knowledge without being bound to teach it, we raise ourselves in the estimation of the people. We shall have a useful class of people at our command, and the influence they may exercise will be beneficial to the people in proportion to their proficiency in those acquirements which we can encourage them to obtain."[4]

The object thus was not very different. But it is the other point in Wilson's testimony which I would invite the reader to notice. Administrators, missionaries, scholars were to assert again and again that India was not a country at all. A number of educated Indians to this day harbour the notion that it was British rule alone which unified the country, which gave us a semblance of oneness by creating — for howsoever small a minority — a *lingua franca* for instance. They would be surprised therefore to read what Wilson had to report about how things stood at the time, that is as late as the 1850's.

He spoke to the interconnections and commonalities of

[4] *Ibid*, p. 624.

Indian languages, in particular to the key place — the key, *living* place — that Sanskrit occupied in the country. "A man will easily become a good vernacular scholar if he is a good Sanscrit scholar, or a good Arabic scholar," he told the Committee. "The system of learning Bengalee among the natives has not been the study of the Bengalee grammar; they never had Bengalee grammars till we gave them to them; their notion of learning Bengalee was by learning Sanscrit. If you make a man a good Sanscrit scholar he will be able to write Bengalee with perfect accuracy and elegance." "What proportion of Sanscrit words are there in the Bengalee language?," the Committee asked. "It is well known," said Wilson," that Bengalee is the language most akin to Sanscrit. I have taken pains to ascertain the proportion of Sanscrit in the first 500 words of 'Shakespeare's Hindustanee Dictionary,' and they amount to 305. In the 'Bengalee Hitopadesh,' which is a class-book, in which the students are examined in the college, out of the first 147 words, there are only five which are not Sanscrit; so that a young man knowing Sanscrit would find in that book, which is the first book given him when he arrives in India, that he already knows 142 words out of 147." "I have supposed the relation between Sanscrit and Hindustanee and the vernacular languages to be something like the relation which subsists between Greek and English, is that the case?," asked a member of the Committee. "Sanscrit forms the very body of most of the dialects, particularly of Upper India," said Wilson, "and though it is not so essentially a part of the languages of Southern India, yet it enters so largely into the composition of even the language of Malabar, that four-fifths of the words are Sanscrit."[5]

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[5] *Ibid*, Minutes of Evidence taken on 18 July, 1853, pp. 9-11.

But Sanskrit was pronounced to be a dead language, those who knew it and used it were pronounced to be exploiters and blood-suckers, the practices which millions from one corner of the country to its opposite carried on were pronounced to be superstition and worse. And India was pronounced to never have been one country, Indians were pronounced not to be a nation at all.

The vacuum having been created in our heads, everything which defined and unified us having been discredited and dissipated, the British put themselves to the task of forging a country out of us!

# Changes and Dilemmas

# 9

# Continuities

"Rama was not such a person (one who could bring solace) because, being a sinner he could not grant peace to his devotees. He himself died and did not rise again, whereas Lord Jesus Christ lives forever and protects his people..."

"Rama, Krishna, Mahadev etc. cannot confer salvation as they themselves were encoiled in vices of various kinds... The Hindus describe the sins of Krishna as having been greater than of men anywhere — that he was a thief, an evildoer, and a bad man. It is well known that he killed the innocent Kansa by deceit. It is very foolish to depend on such gods.... And then many people believe that Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh will save you. But all your books describe how they are lying fallen in the nearest well. Thus they are themselves powerless. Indeed, one needs someone to save them too.... From the gods to Brahma, they are all in the grip of sin...."

"No where in the Hindu shastras is it stated that their gods led any pure sort of life. On the contrary, it is written that all their gods were great sinners and evildoers. It is written about their special gods — Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva — that because of their licentious conduct towards the wife of Atri they have all been born again. The idols that are found in their temples and the Devdasis and dancing girls

who serve in those temples, do nothing except corrupt the devotees.... The dharma of the Hindus is an illusionary religion, a religion of superstitions..."

"...Therefore anyone who makes an idol, venerates it or has it venerated is ignorant and a sinner... From the shastras and Puranas it is clear that all the gods and avtaars were in the coils of lust, anger, greed, obstinacy and pride. It is not appropriate that at this point we set out the evil deeds of these gods. Their characters are described at length in the shastras and Puranas, and from them we come to know that these gods perpetrated many kinds of condemnable things. They were sinners all. And now say whether it is right or wrong to worship a sinner or the idol of a sinner.... Some of these gods committed sin with the wives of others. Because of the lust and evil in their hearts they fell in the bondage of the wives of others and so lost control of themselves. When these gods did not have even this much strength and control as to vanquish their evil desires, when they did not have strength enough even to stay out of the coils of such women, then who shall deem them to have been strong?... Now, when you learn from their character and conduct that your own gods used to commit heinous sins shamelessly, shall you shirk from sin?... It is by reflecting on the affairs, the lies, the thievery, the evil and sins of these gods and goddesses that we say that he who worships them shall never be better than them. Someone has well said, as the teacher so the pupil..."

"The chief attribute of God is purity. Do we find this quality in Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh? Their character is so low and shameful that it is not appropriate that I should describe it here... The main reason why the worship of Brahma has ceased is his sin. The form in which Shiva is worshipped is indeed shameful.... Shiva could not defeat Jullunder Yukt in

battle as the latter's wife was a *pativrata.* Thereupon God corrupted that lady so that Shiva may triumph.... The hands and feet of Jagannath are chopped off. The Hindus accept that he has been reduced to this condition because of the sins he committed in his incarnation as Krishna...."

That is just a sample from publications put out by missionary societies right upto the early *Nineteen fifties.*[1] Notice first the longevity of the canards. Recall Wilberforce declaiming in the House of Commons in 1813:

> It has been truly remarked, particularly by the historian of America, that the moral character of a people may commonly be known from the nature and attributes of the objects of its worship. On this principle, we might have anticipated the moral condition of the Hindoos, by ascertaining the character of their deities. If it was truly affirmed of the old pagan mythology, that scarcely a crime could be committed, the perpetrator of which might not plead in his justification, the precedent of one of its national gods; far more truly may it be said, that in the adventures of the countless rabble of Hindoo deities, you may find every possible variety of every practicable crime. Here also, more truly than of old, every vice has its patron as well as its example. Their divinities are absolute monsters of lust, injustice, wickedness and cruelty. In short, their religious system is one grand abomination.

Recall Sir Charles Trevelyan addressing his compatriots in 1881:

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[1] C.f., *Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee, op. cit.,* 1956, Volume II, Part B, pp. 52-8.

> Of all the religions which mankind have invented for themselves, it (Hinduism) has gone furthest in deifying human vice and holding out its impersonations as objects of imitation and worship. From murder to petty larceny, every crime has its patron in the Hindu Pantheon. The pickpocket quotes Krishna pilfering the milkmaids; the swindler adores Gunesh; the prostitute glories in her profession, and officiates at the service of all the gods, although she is a special devotee of Kami, the Hindu Venus. All these, however, are trifles compared with the abominations behind...

And recall the passages which have just been quoted from pamphlets produced by the missionaries right up to the mid-1950s: not just the wholesale distortions, but the examples, the very words remained the same for a hundred and fifty years.

Consider next the durability of devices other than calumny.

*Long-lived devices*

"It is understood that your institutions are distinctly intended to produce the conversion of the children?," we saw the *Select Committee on Indian Territories* ask Reverend Rice. "Decidedly," he answered. "Just as much as your preaching is?," we saw the Committee ask him. "Quite so," the Reverend stated. That was in August *Eighteen* fifty-three.

"What is the advantage of the school to the Church?," the Church publication *Gharbandhu* asks in an article, *School ke Faayede*. And answers: "Schools are the means for the expansion of the Kingdom." That in the issue of January *Nineteen* fifty-two.

"Evangelism is our call," declares the report of the Church of the Nazerene. "We make no excuse nor ask for any reservation in this period. Jesus has called us to preach the Gospel to every creature and we mean to do it in every phase of our work, be it educational, medical or distinctly evangelical. 'Go, teach, win' is the command under which we work. We cannot lessen this emphasis." That in a report of *Nineteen* fifty-four.

"Missionary and Board members alike are increasingly aware of the need both for a dynamic programme of direct evangelism and the use of medicine and education in the development of the work," states *The Conservative Baptist* of March *Nineteen* fifty-four.

"A preacher named Asaf Gudia has been sent to this area. He works as preacher and teacher. As the object of this mission area is to spread Christianity through a school, we shall focus on the school.... In this way this is not just a worldly school, it is a Christian school. Yes, it is a house for preaching Christianity.... The teacher considers it his duty that the word of Christ should take root and flower in the students. When you go there today you will find that all the boys and girls know the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Catechism by heart. Not only that, they also know the accounts of the Old and New Testaments and many Christian songs and hymns, which they sing.... There is great hope that they shall accept Christ when they grow up because at the moment they are under the influence of their parents... It is a matter of joy that the Munda religion of the village does not prohibit instructing the children on religious matters, and that the village has taken upon itself the responsibility of looking after the teacher. Pray to God that through this school many may find the Way to Salvation and accept Jesus Christ..." That is from the *Gharbandhu* of

March *Nineteen* fifty-three.[2]

The unchanging goal, the continuity of means. To the repugnance of many who actually loved the ones these missionaries were roping in to save. "In Mandla," reported Verrier Elwin in 1944, "the situation has grown serious for here the Fathers of the Apostolic prefecture Jabalpur are proselytising on an unprecedented scale and on the method that would have been considered disgraceful in the middle ages.... The missionaries usurp many of the functions of Government officials, try to interfere in the work of the courts and business of the local officials and give the Gonds the impression that they are the real Sirkar, and the Fathers finally have an extensive money-lending business and this is one of the most effective means of bringing aboriginals under their control and forcing them into the Church."[3]

There has been a continuity, thus, in the goal, in the means — education and schools in the examples given above. There has been even more telling continuity in the groups which the Church has looked upon as targets. From the *sixteenth* century to this day the Church has focussed its efforts on two groups: Harijans and tribals.

*Enduring targets*

"The first phase of the mass conversion to Christianity from the oppressed Scheduled Caste," notes the background paper which was prepared for the C.B.C.I. Conference at Pune, "began in the 16th century when the Portuguese authorities and the missionaries extended protection to the

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[2] For the citations see *Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee*, Madhya Pradesh, Government Printing Press, 1956, Volume 1, pp. 107, 157; Volume II, Part B, p. 61.

[3] *Ibid*, Volume I, p. 48.

oppressed Paravars of the Coromandal Coast in Tamil Nadu and Mukkuvars of Kerala Coast..."[4]

The Census Report of 1881, Bombay, points not just to the opportunity, it pinpoints the reason for it: "The greater receptivity of the members of the lower class is due to the emotional appeal which neither his intelligence nor his education disposes him to enlarge..."

"But what is most important to you, friends of missions," we observed Sir Richard Temple telling the Baptist Missionary Society, "is this — that there is a large population of aborigines, a people who are outside caste.... These aborigines by their mind and conscience offer a surface like clean paper, upon which the missionaries may make a mark.... If they are attached, as they rapidly may be, to Christianity, they will form a nucleus round which British power and influence may gather..." Then followed the counsel to redouble the efforts at weaning the women on western education and values "in the full confidence that such educational enlightenment must be necessarily followed by the propagation of Christianity."

That is the counsel, the expectation, as we saw, in *Eighteen* eighty-three.

And here is the report the Secretary prepared for the C.B.C.I. review meeting in *Nineteen* ninety-four: "Some of the major social trends in India with which the missionaries are collaborating are the following: (a) Dalit liberation movement; (b) Tribal liberation movement; (c) Women's liberation movement; (d) Environmental protection."[5]

Throughout the British period this focus on Harijans and tribals was facilitated by, it was paralleled by steps of the Government. The operation consisted of several strands:

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[4] See Annexure II, para 43.
[5] See Annexure I, para V.15.

every opportunity — from scholarly articles to Census operations — was taken to put in circulation the notion that the group concerned was *not* a part of Hindu society; next, leaders from within that group or leaders from outside who would further that notion of separateness in that group were patronised and encouraged — recall the history, and the consequences of the Justice Party in the South, or the Singh Sabha movement in Punjab; and, finally, a set of benefits was decreed which would be available to members of that group upon their detaching themselves from the rest. Again, the decisions of the rulers, the propaganda of the missionaries, and the academic work of the scholars all moved in tandem to ensure the objective — the severing of the target group from the rest of society, in particular from Hindu society.

Two examples will illustrate the stratagems. One involves one target group — the tribals; the second, the other target group — Harijans. One involves the first stratagem — of sowing separateness at the level of concepts and notions; the second involves the third stratagem — of decreeing a benefit which would be available on the condition of the group cutting itself off from the rest of society, in particular from Hindu society. The examples illustrate both aspects which we have been discussing — namely, that the stratagems worked at many levels: from notions to concrete benefits; and that what one agency needed — the severance of these target groups from Hindu society which the missionaries needed — was brought into being by the other agency: the Government in the examples that follow.

*Detaching the tribals*

The foremost target group — the tribals — were declared to be not Hindus, but "Animists". The tribals of course would

not have known what "Animism" was, but it was defined by officials, missionaries and scholars: a belief in spirits, which move about freely, exercise power over the affairs of men and have therefore to be propitiated, spirits which often take up residence in some object which object in turn becomes the object of worship; belief in omens — no journey or task being commenced unless the omens have been ascertained to be propitious etc. And on the basis of criteria of this kind tribals were hacked off from Hindu society.

One has but to read the descriptions of Animism which were relied upon to notice that they could well be describing a variety of Hindus. Where to another observer the commonalities would have suggested that the beliefs and practices of tribals were a species of Hinduism, the rulers etc. took the view that these were just a few traits which happened to be common between two entities which were otherwise separate and distinct.

How much ground there was for the separation soon became apparent: one Census Report after another noted that it was proving to be extremely difficult to separate Animists from Hindus. For one thing the tribals do not know the name of their own religion, the Census Commissioners noted — this difficulty was got over by recording in such cases the name of the tribe in the Column for "Religion", thus creating a multiplicity of new religions ! But the other difficulty was more serious, the Census Commissioners noted.

"The dividing line between Hinduism and Animism is uncertain," the 1901 Census noted in its Report on the Lower Provinces of Bengal and their Feudatories. "Hinduism does not, like Christianity and Islam, demand of its votaries the rejection of all other religious beliefs; and.... amongst many of the lower castes of Hindus the real working religion derives its inspiration, not from the Vedas, but from the non-

Aryan beliefs of the aborigines..."[6] The 1911 Census noted the same difficulty, and how the enumeration was coming to depend on the idiosyncrasies of individual enumerators — leading to wild fluctuations in the figures of one place between one Census and the next, to wide differences between the enumerations of contiguous areas within one Census.

By the 1921 Census the Census Commissioners had been stretched to extremes. "In the case of all other religions," noted the 1921 Census Report for Bihar and Orissa, "there is one main underlying difficulty, namely the difficulty of saying where Hinduism begins or ends, for all these religions represent either off-shoots from Hinduism or the great outlying mass of tribal religions from which by insensible degrees converts to Hinduism are continually being recruited..." The Hindus have not the concept of "religion" as the word is used, the Report noted, they think in terms of — the much more inclusive and comprehensive concept of — "dharma". In particular, it is extremely difficult to distinguish "Animism" from the "lower forms of Hinduism," the Report noted. "A typical case from Hazaribagh, that of Bhuiyas," it recorded in a typical passage, "has already been noted in which a large number of persons were returned as Hindus who on a more searching scrutiny would probably be classed as Animists. In Ranchi in outlying parts persons who are certainly Animists join in Hindu festivals, but persons who are equally certainly Hindus and even Muhammadans join in propitiating the local spirits through aboriginal priests..."[7] The enumeration was accordingly coming to depend on the whims of the enumerators and the vagaries of the respondents, the Report recorded.

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[6] E.A. Gait, *Census of India, 1901,* Volume VI, *The Lower Provinces of Bengal and their Feudatories,* Part I, p.152.

[7] P.C. Tallents, *Census of India, 1921,* Volume VII, Bihar and Orissa, Part I, pp. 122, 125-6.

"The classification 'Animist' has never been satisfactory," Colonel Luard noted in his Report of the 1921 Census covering Central India, "and it would be much better if it were to disappear altogether. It is never possible to say where the Animist begins and the Hindu ends and there are ample instances of Animistic survivals even in Christian creeds and practices...." He too went on to give several instances of wild fluctuations in the figures, and to note how these had been affected by the "idiosyncrasies of enumeration." "As noted above," he reiterated later, "it would be an advantage if this very indifferent classification ('Animists') was to vanish from the Census reports. The return is too artificial to be useful..."[8]

All observation pointed to a continuum, all experience pointed to the impracticality of segregating tribals from the Hindus and to the vagueness of "Animism" as a category of demarcation. These factors should have suggested the obvious conclusion: abandon the effort at separating the tribals from Hindus. But that was just what was not to be done. Thus in the 1931 Census "Animism" was abandoned all right, but only to be replaced by a new category "Tribal Religions"! Doubly useful, no doubt: instead of being seen to have had merely some vague collection of superstitions, each tribe now had a proper "religion"; and there now was not just one more category — Animism — in the zoo that was India, there were many "tribal religions".

Naturally all the old difficulties surfaced again. Witness Shoobert's Census Report on the Central Provinces and Berar:

> On the one hand events of recent years had led to a political movement to claim all Gonds and many other primitive people as Hindus. On the other there is a

[8] C.E. Luard, *Census of India, 1921,* Volume XVIII, *Central India Agency,* pp. 23, 24.

marked tendency among some tribesmen to return themselves as Hindus, whatever form of religion they may be following, with the idea of gaining social uplift. The catholic nature of Hinduism makes it very easy for aborigines to be returned as members of the Hindu fold, and the tribesmen themselves adopt varying attitudes. For instance in Jashpur State the Pahari Korwas claim to follow their own religion, whilst the majority of the Dehari Korwas returned themselves as Hindus. In Udaipur the Oraons indignantly repudiate any suggestion that they are Hindus, and yet in Jashpur the statistics for this tribe show equal numbers following Hinduism and tribal religions. Some members of the Pando tribe, a typical people of the forest, living until lately principally by hunting, claim to be Hindus simply because they do not eat the flesh of the cow. Fluctuations in the figures of earlier censuses show how much the proper classification of tribal religions has depended upon the whim of the enumerator. In the Central Provinces the facile identification of Bara Deo, the God of the Gonds, with the Hindu Mahadeo has of course been a source of continual difficulty. The results of the contact of Hinduism with the animistic beliefs of the aboriginal tribes were in fact very apparent even in the time of Forsyth, who has dealt at some length on the subject in "The Highlands of Central India", a book written of the period between 1860 and 1870. On the other hand the religion of Hindu villagers has been greatly influenced by the age-long beliefs of the primitive tribes. The following passage is quoted from the *Central Provinces Gazetteer*:-

> "The Hinduism of the Central Provinces is largely tinctured by nature and animal worship and

> by the veneration of deified human beings. Even in the more advanced districts there are usually a number of village gods, for the worship of whom a special priest belonging to the primitive tribes called Bhumka or Baiga is supported by contributions from the villagers. Khermata, the goddess of the earth or the village, Marhai Devi, the goddess of cholera, Sitala Devi, the goddess of small-pox, Nagdeo, the cobra, Bainsa sur, the buffalo, Dulha Deo, a young bridegroom who was killed by a tiger, Hardaul, a young Rajput prince who was poisoned by his brother on suspicion of loving his wife, and Bhilat, a deified cowherd, are the most common of these."[9]

In Bihar and Orissa, the other region where tribals were numerous, Lacey was having the same difficulties in segregating them from Hindus. Here is how he saw the difficulty in general:

> The process of dividing up the population of the province into so many water-tight religious compartments is attended with numerous difficulties, which have formed the subject of lengthy discussion in previous census reports. It is not proposed to traverse the same ground on the present occasion. Suffice it to say that the conception of a religion in contradistinction to *another* religion, where each has its own quite definite creed and its own peculiar observances, is something foreign to the minds of the vast bulk of India's population. When therefore the census tables tell us that

[9] W.H. Shoobert, *Census of India, 1931*, Volume VII, *Central Provinces and Berar*, Part I, p. 324.

there are so many Hindus, so many Muslims, so many Christians in the province, they refer not so much to the personal beliefs, convictions or outlook of these people as to the particular communal or sectional labels to which they subscribe. While we need not go quite so far as does one correspondent, who writes that "with the spread of political knowledge almost all new or old religious movements have been shut out; but on the pretext of religious observation some communities protect their respective political rights," it is not without significance that such a devastating statement could have been made. Again, the problem of determining how far the various religions of India are mutually exclusive and how far they overlap one another — above all, of deciding where Hinduism begins and where it ends — has always been well-nigh insoluble; but fresh complications have undoubtedly been introduced into this tangled skein by what has just been termed "the spread of political knowledge."[10]

And when he came to the specific point of recording the numbers that had been enumerated under the new head "Tribal Religions" Lacey acknowledged, "As already explained, it is largely a matter of chance how the religion of these primitive and semi-primitive tribes is recorded in the census schedules, and little value can be attached to the statistics."[11]

The Census Reports give instance after instance of how the results have been affected by the preferences of enumerators — which varied and changed — and by the predi-

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[10] W.G. Lacey, *Census of India, 1931*, Volume VII, *Bihar and Orissa*, Part I, pp. 246-7.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

lections of tribes — which it seemed varied and changed as much. They mention instance after instance of efforts being made to specify criteria so as to help enumerators distinguish tribals from Hindus, of a Subdivisional Officer here, of someone else there trying his best to make the enumerators understand and differentiate, to no avail. Here is Tallents' account of a typical instance:

> Mr. Christian, the Subdivisional Officer of Chatra, who took great pains to try and get a correct return, worked out a whole set of questions, but they were necessarily so complicated that after making a few attempts he found it impossible to get the enumerators to understand them, and eventually he had to leave the decision entirely to the person enumerated. The Bhuiyas in the Chatra subdivision are decidedly Animistic in their belief and practices but "all Bhuiyas of course call themselves Hindus and every enumerator I questioned calls them Hindus as well; and, when I explained how they were not, they agreed in deference to me but were obviously not convinced. It will be seen therefore how hopeless it was. The result as regards the Bhuiyas will therefore in the main certainly not be in accordance with facts."[12]

But air was sliced up none the less. Those whom, in conformity with a century-long assessment, the 1931 Census Report for Bihar and Orissa had called "the most fruitful field for Christian missionaries" — namely, the tribals — were kept out of Hindu society.

The same sort of opportunity had presented itself in the

[12] P.C. Tallents, *Census of India, 1921,* Volume VII, *Bihar and Orissa,* Part I, p. 125.

case of several other groups, and from time to time Satnaamis, Kabirpanthies, Arya Samajis, and of course the Brahmos had been excluded from the enumeration of Hindus. The attempts had not survived: the customs these groups had shed, and on the shedding of which the enumerators had relied for enumerating them separately, had reappeared among them, and, worse, the groups had started making it a point to declare themselves as Hindus.

Indeed, a reaction had set in across the board and in the 1920's groups had started moving among even the tribals to exhort them to make sure that they were not excluded from "Hindus". But that particular exclusion was maintained. And it was given institutional recognition by its incorporation in the proposals of the Simon Commission.

How durable the effects of such notions are can be seen from an example concerning an issue much in our newspapers these days. As is well known, there has been much controversy about the Sardar Sarovar project across Narmada. In 1991 the World Bank appointed a team of three consultants to review the matter. They submitted their report in 1992. One of the grounds on which they oppose the project is that the tribals are a distinct people and that the project, by dislocating them, would end their distinctive culture.

The consultants notice that "...although the tribal religion has much in common with the animist or shamanic religions of tribal people elsewhere (in Africa and America), its practices (in India) have never existed entirely apart from Hinduism. Tribals and nearby Hindus have often accepted each other's deities as different forms of their own deities..." They note again, "We also saw signs of Hindu influence, or of symbols and practices that Hindu and tribal life have in common. (Notice the predisposition to see the two as separate — "signs of Hindu *influence*," "symbols and practices that

Hindu and tribal life *have in common.*") Some of the innumerable small shrines that are to be seen at the edges of every tribal village contain a mixture of tribal and Hindu effigies. In particular, we noticed effigies of Shiva. In fact, the people did not repudiate Hinduism; rather they affirmed their separateness...". Even though these are the impressions the consultants themselves form, they conclude that the tribals are separate from and outside Hindu society, that they are not just "backward Hindus". They cite with approval and obviously as something that helps establish this conclusion what a British anthropologist has written in his paper for them. This is how they put it:

> Dr. Felix Padel, a British Anthropologist who has worked intensively on the place of tribal groups within Indian society, in a submission to our review, considered some of the historical background to the issue:
>
> "At first contact with tribal people in India, the British called them 'wild tribes', 'savage tribes', 'forest tribes', 'hill tribes' — terms taken from British contacts with the native peoples of Africa and America, but not so different from terms already used in India. 'Forest tribes' translates the term used for them on the emperor Asoka's edicts that threaten them with dire punishment if they do not obey his rules. The derivation of many names for tribes... comes from the word for hill... The census, started in 1871, distinguished the tribal population from Hindus and their religion, as 'animism' from Hinduism."[13]

[13] Bradford Morse and Thomas Berger, *Sardar Sarovar, Report of the Independent Review,* Resources Futures International Inc., Ottawa, 1992, pp. 66-7; for passages cited earlier, pp. 67 and 69.

And that becomes proof! There is not a word naturally about what the Census Commissioners themselves concluded over the decades about the distinction between "Animism" and Hinduism!

*Sawing off the other target group*

What was being done in the case of tribals was being done for other groups too. Recall M. Macauliffe in 1903 stating in his well-known *A Lecture on the Sikh Religion and Its Advantages to the State*[14]: "At former (census) enumerations village Sikhs in their ignorance generally recorded themselves as Hindus, as indeed they virtually were. With the experience gained by time, a sharp line of demarcation has now been drawn between Sikhs and Hindus...." Census demarcations were of course only one part of an entire operation: ceremonies that would instil and widen feelings of separateness among the Sikh recruits were for instance consciously introduced in the Army. The effort at separating the other target group of the missionaries — Harijans — reached a climax in 1931/'32.

In 1906 a delegation of Muslims led by the Aga Khan was steered into submitting a memorandum to the Viceroy, Lord Minto, demanding separate electorates for Muslims: the delegation had been "engineered" (by and through a well-disposed Muslim politician), Lady Minto wrote in her Journal. Once the delegation had met the Viceroy and presented the memorandum which had been drafted for it, she was all enthusiasm — "This has been a very eventful day; as someone said to me, 'an epoch in Indian History'," she wrote in her Journal and quoted the letter an official had sent her: "I

[14] Government Central Printing Office, Simla, 1903.

must send Your Excellency a line to say that a very, very big thing has happened today: a work of statesmanship that will affect India and Indian history for many a long year. It is nothing less than the pulling back of 62 millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition." The Aga Khan who had led that "engineered" delegation justly claimed in retrospect, "Lord Minto's acceptance of our demands was the foundation of all future constitutional proposals made for India by successive British Governments, and the final inevitable consequence was the partition of India and the emergence of Pakistan." For, as W.C. Smith points out in his *Modern Islam in India*, "The separate electorates compelled the Muslims to vote communally, think communally, listen only to communal election speeches, judge the delegates communally, look for constitutional and other reforms only in terms of more relative communal power, and express their grievances communally."[15]

Soon enough the "Minorities" had been brought together and the "Minorities Pact" signed. Next, the leaders of the Harijans were steered to subscribe to it; they too now demanded separate electorates for themselves. The Simon Commission had assessed the demand as recently as 1930, and had stated:

> Most of the depressed class associations which appeared before us favoured separate electorates, with seats allocated on the basis of population, though one or two still wished to retain nomination. Separate electorates would no doubt be the safest method of securing the return of an adequate number of persons who

[15] For this sequence in the case of Muslim politics and for the citations relating to the 1906 delegation see, H.V. Seshadri, *The Tragic Story of Partition*, Jagrana Prakashan, Bangalore, 1984, pp. 35-43.

enjoy the confidence of the depressed classes; but we are averse from stereotyping the differences between the depressed classes and the remainder of the Hindus by such a step, which we consider would introduce a new and serious bar to their ultimate political amalgamation with others. Such a course would be all the more difficult to justify in those provinces where the breaking down of barriers has advanced furthest. A separate electorate for depressed classes means, as a preliminary, a precise definition of all who are covered by the term, and the boundary would be in some cases difficult to draw. It means stigmatising each individual voter in the list, and militates against the process which is already beginning, and which needs to be in every way encouraged — that of helping those who are depressed to rise in the social and economic scale.[16]

But by the next year itself moves were set in motion to cleave off this vast target-group. In August 1932 Government announced that, as in the case of Muslims, there would be separate electorates for Harijans also. Gandhiji had long seen what the British had been aiming at and had warned the Minorities Committee in London in November 1931 that he would resist the move with his life. He therefore commenced his fast-unto-death on September 20, 1932. It was this fast alone which defeated the design to cleave away this target group from Hindu society.

That particular stratagem of the Government had to be taken back in September 1932 itself. But the consequences continue to this day: the reservations we see in the Lok Sabha are a consequence of the "Yeravda Pact" that had to be

[16] *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Volume II, Government of India, Central Publication Branch, Calcutta, 1930, p. 65.

signed to wean back leaders like Dr. Ambedkar who had endorsed the British move.

Three things stand out. First, the examples show how the stratagems of the British rulers and the efforts of the missionaries proceeded in tandem. Second, they show how long-lasting the effects of such moves are. And, finally, they show that to achieve such vast results it is not necessary to push through major measures: it is sufficient to plant a mere seed. One has but to sow a seed of division: soon enough a politics of separateness congeals around it. One has to introduce just a notion: it acquires a life of its own; within but a few years that seed-notion becomes the norm, and questioning it becomes special-pleading, it becomes communal, chauvinist-fascist!

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# 10

# Adjustments

For over a hundred years thus missionary activity was interwoven with, and inextricably tied up with British imperial control of India: that the missionaries — even those of Indian origin — did not join the Independence Movement was not an accident; nor was it an accident that those who did — C.F. Andrews for instance — abandoned missionary work all together.

Understandably therefore the departure of the British impelled the Church to make many changes: the very idiom changed — from being the other half of the rulers, the unofficial branch of Government, they began to see themselves as and to present themselves as spokesmen of a minority which was in danger of being swamped. Calumny was replaced by carefulness : "Our theological language is necessarily influenced by the past tradition and inheritance," the paper of the C.B.C.I.'s Working Group notes. "But we should ascertain that our expressions do not offend the self-understanding and self-respect of others. Our language must be theologically clear but also respectful for people of other faiths. It must be revised..." Similarly, while the two principal target groups — the Harijans and the tribals — remained the same, the methods of targeting them were changed.

As for Harijans, the rationalizations for working among

them became both — more aggressive but also different. Where justifications originally had been in terms of the opportunity which the condition of the Harijans presented for ensuring a great harvest for the Church, the work was now sought to be justified in reference to what was claimed to be the essential nature of Christianity. Christianity was to begin with the religion of the proletariat, it was said in accord with what was the fashionable vocabulary of the fifties. Later the effort was sought to be justified in terms of the full-fledged "Liberation Theology" which the Church — having presided over and benefited from the wholesale extermination of the native populations — had developed in Latin America. The direction of effort too changed: in addition to attempting outright conversion on a large scale, missionary organizations concentrated on encouraging, projecting, assisting "Dalit leaders" *per se*. We must suppose that there was some desire to help alleviate the condition of the Harijans, and supporting these "spontaneous" movements must have been thought of as the best available method of doing so. There must also have been the desire to be associated with "progressive" causes — that was the fashion of the day, moreover there was the association of the Church with imperialism to put behind. But it would strain credulity to think that those who still sincerely believed that Jesus had commanded them to spread Christianity did not notice that these "spontaneous" movements would certainly disrupt Hindu society.

In regard to the tribals the initial efforts of the missionaries were directed at opposing the programmes — for instance, the setting up of government schools — in tribal areas, and simultaneously pooh-poohing the efforts on the charge that they amounted to nothing, that in fact no benefits were reaching the tribals, and to instigating the tribals against

the efforts. The *Christian Missionary Activities Committee Report* reproduces at length a letter from Father Vermiere of the Jashpur Roman Catholic Mission to his superiors. We may recall only the concluding part:

> You may have read lately in the Herald some very spirited answers purported to come from Jashpur Christian students, against the vile slander by one who came with a large retinue to spy our Institutions at Gholeng and Ginabahar. He dares call himself a member of the much esteemed Servants of India Society. He and his colleague have nearly wrecked the nascent Mission of the Norbertine Fathers in Mandla, District Jubbulpore. They were sent here by the Prime Minister, but if they hope to ruin this Mission, they are very much mistaken. Our Catholics are too advanced to be taken in, or frightened by such slanderers. Protest meetings against their vile report continue to be held, chiefly to wreck their treacherous machinations. As one of the two is a sort of Minister for the uplift of the backward people, he has a considerable Government budget to dispose of. Their aim is more to prevent us from converting, than to care for the uplift of those they used to keep in bondage. Just now they are starting 40 new schools for these backward Adibasis. The third I hear of, is in a village where we possess a school since 30 years. But knowing that many pagan children come to our schools and that we had sent a petition for a building to enlarge that school, they surreptitiously try and draw away the pagan children from us. But we are ready for them. Today my men are gone there to attend a big panchayat to draw up a protest, and get all the pagans to refuse withdrawing their children from us. I am giv-

ing you all this for the sake of those in the community interested in Jashpur affairs.[1]

As one reads accounts of this kind, one is again struck by how the Church's reactions remained unchanged over the decades, and also by the acuteness and prescience which enabled Gandhiji to always put his finger on the point. Your anti-untouchability campaign has disturbed some of our Missionary friends, Gandhiji was told, it "is taking away from the Missionary's popularity."

"I see what you mean," Gandhiji said, "but I do not know why it should disturb them. We are not traders trenching on one another's province. If it is a matter of serving oneself, I should understand their attitude, but when it is entirely a matter of serving others, it should not worry them or me as to who serves them."

"But, perhaps, the authorities in charge of a Mission hospital would rightly feel worried if you sent your people to go and open a hospital in the same place," said the interlocutor.

"But they should understand that ours is a different mission," replied Gandhiji. "We do not go there to afford them simple medical relief or a knowledge of the three R's; our going to them is a small proof of our repentance and our assurance to them that we will not exploit them any more. I should never think of opening a hospital where there is already one; but if there is a Mission school, I should not mind opening another for Harijan children, and I would even encourage them to prefer our school to the other. Let us frankly understand the position. If the object is purely humanitarian, purely that of carrying education where there is none, they (the missionaries) should

[1] *Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee, op. cit.*, Volume I, pp. 8-9.

be thankful that someone whose obvious duty it is to put his own house in order wakes up to a sense of his duty. But my trouble is that the Missionary friends do not bring to bear on their work a purely humanitarian spirit. Their object is to add more members to their fold, and that is why they are disturbed. The complaint which I have been making all these years is more than justified by what you say..."[2]

*New directions*

As time went on it became more and more difficult to take umbrage at governmental efforts being extended to tribal areas. Missionaries therefore recaliberated their efforts in three other directions.

First they made sure that their efforts at converting the tribals remained unhindered. This was done by insisting that conversion was an essential element of Christianity, that it was not just a right which a Christian enjoyed by virtue of Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution, it was the bounden duty of every Christian, Jesus himself having commanded every Christian to be a missionary. On reasoning which cannot be sustained, the courts have accepted this assertion at face value.[3] Simultaneously, even as instances have kept coming up of conversions having been secured by allurement etc., the missionaries have successfully fought off every effort to enjoin on the State the duty to scrutinise conversions — recall the manner in which they reacted to the effort of the Janata Government to pre-empt conversions secured through force, fraud and allurement. Next, having denounced Hinduism for two centuries for its caste system and having proclaimed the egalitarianism of Christianity on the ground that

[2] *Collected Works*, Volume 60, p. 76.
[3] See, *A Secular Agenda*, ASA Publications, Delhi, 1993, pp. 57-78.

it does not recognize caste, the missionaries have been in the forefront of the campaign to ensure that benefits like reservations in jobs should be available to scheduled caste Christians and Christian tribals also! This demand of the missionaries also the politicians and courts have now conceded by the new executive orders on reservations and by the Supreme Court's recent decision on reservations. And, finally, while they were not able to prevent the Government from extending medical, educational and other measures to the tribal areas, those who have been projecting the point of view of the missionaries have aimed at discrediting such efforts in these areas of non-official agencies which would come in the way of conversions.

But there has been another adjustment, one that is liable to have a much more injurious consequence — for the country, and, by the backlash it will eventually ignite, for the Church itself. We have seen how for over a hundred years the Church could rely on the umbrella of the State, how it was able to function in tandem with officers of State. Clearly it could not expect that kind of protection and cooperation after 1947. Accordingly, it readjusted its goal, and tactical devices.

The aim henceforth of an influential part of the Church was to carve out states, or areas within states, in which Christians would be in majority as Christians or, at the least, areas in which persons running the governments would be amenable to the influence of the Church. The effort has proceeded farthest in the North-East, and has become a cause for concern among the intelligence and defence services.

Intelligence information received by Government establishes the help and guidance which specified missionary groups have been giving to secessionist groups in Nagaland and Manipur. Specific information points to their association

with insurgent groups like the Naga National Council (A) led by Adrino Phizo, the daughter of A.Z. Phizo, and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I). The contacts of the leaders of these organizations with missionaries, the support the Church groups have given to related organizations to advocate secession at international meetings, decisions taken at meetings abroad to channel funds for the "development programmes" of organizations like NSCN (I) — all these have been the subject of specific information. Such support for secessionist groups is the greatest in Nagaland, followed by Manipur. In Mizoram the role of the Church is overtly political. In 1988 two separate incidents involving Fathers of the Dengtol Mission and the Sarabil Centre pointed to their association with Bodo activists. In 1992 two British nationals were caught; they had been advocating a separate Naga country through a Naga Vigil Organisation and had been receiving active support from the insurgent Naga National Council (A).

Inclinations and activities of this sort by even a part of the Church constitute a grave danger as the influence the Church exercises in these areas is enormous: 85 per cent of the population of Mizoram, 80 per cent of that in Nagaland, 50 per cent in Meghalaya has already been converted. Information with Government shows that many of the old sorts of means continue to be used to secure converts: the use of paid agents to cultivate contacts; the distribution of "presents" to win over poor and ignorant people; provision of board and lodging to potential converts on their visits to the foothills; the payment of a price upon conversion, the payment of a price for arranging conversions; the "buying off" of a headman of the village so as to convert other villagers etc. That the conversions have little to do with an individual coming to realize that truth resides in Christianity is also suggested by the large numbers who are converted together

at the baptismal ceremony — up to 350 at one ceremony, in the figures mentioned in a recent intelligence report.

Intelligence reports mention that having entrenched themselves in the other states, missionaries are concentrating their efforts in the strategic Arunachal Pradesh: in 1971 less than 0.8 per cent of the population of this area was Christian; today about one-eighth of it has already been converted.

These conversions have led to social tensions, to clashes between the converts and the rest, the intelligence agencies report with concern. The tensions and clashes prepare the ground for anti-national forces to secure allies and clients, they note.

And now come intelligence reports to Government of the secessionist NSCN (K) coordinating contacts with the Tribal Baptist Mission in areas adjacent to Myanmar. The reports speak also of "liberal financial contributions" between the NSCN (K) and a specific church organization.

*Four-fold help*

For these political aims, and also of course for the other work it has been doing — from conversions to running philanthropic institutions — the Church has been able to call upon help of four kinds.

First among these is what by Indian standards can only be described as an almost inexhaustible source of foreign funds. These have admittedly come, and been used. The rationalization for receiving and using such funds has been that Christianity, that the Church in particular, is a universal, transnational religion and Church — the very rationalization which was at hand for and was used by the communists, and today is at hand for and is used by Islamic groups.

In addition to, and in many ways more potent than funds,

have been the vast networks — of the media for instance — to which the Church in India has had access because of its international affiliations. The Church has thereby been able to stay and force back even the slightest effort to scrutinize and rein in what the missionaries have been doing: the *Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee* set out as an example a typical case: a missionary was twice convicted for smuggling rice; he thereupon hurled grave allegations against officials, allegations which on inquiry were found to be false; but suddenly a campaign exploded abroad, in Delhi, in the press to the effect that missionaries were being targeted and persecuted in India, in Madhya Pradesh in particular.[4]

Equally effective shelter has come from the type of "secularism" which has been practised in India since the fifties: one in which double-standards have been the norm, one which shuns details. How effective a source of immunity this has been will be evident from a simple consideration that I mentioned at the outset: the material about the mutually supportive attitudes of the civilian administrators, the missionaries and the learned scholars which has been reproduced above will probably be a surprise to most of us, it certainly was to me when I first came across it; yet it is available in abundance, and easily. Why is it that our students are never exposed to it?

It is made even more evident by the facts we have been considering now. Why is it that, while intelligence agencies have been warning Government in writing about the role of some missionary groups in fomenting secession in the North-East, those dangers are never acknowledged in public by Government, far from its taking the necessary steps to put an end to the activities of such elements?

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[4] C.f., *Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee, op. cit.*, Volume I, pp. 19-22.

The most potent help has come from the weakened condition of the State: while the Government has had information about the aid some missionary organizations have been giving to secessionist groups, just as it has had information about the infiltration from Bangladesh, it has not had the gumption to enforce the law in regard to these missionaries exactly as it has not had the gumption to enforce the law in regard to the infiltrators.

Supporting secessionist groups like the Naga National Council and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland is of course a crime, yet little has been done to stem it. And so is much of what the missionaries are doing in Arunachal Pradesh a violation of existing laws, yet little is done to stem their violations. Because of the tensions and clashes which the aggressive extension of missionary activities was causing in the area, the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act was passed in 1978. This Act prohibited conversions "by the use of force or by inducement or by any fraudulent means." It provided punishments — imprisonment of upto two years and fine upto Rs. 10,000 — for any person engaging in or abetting attempts to secure conversions by such means. It provided that no religious building other than a building of the indigenous faith could be constructed without the express approval of the Government of Arunachal Pradesh. In addition, there are the Inner Line Regulations under which no person whose entry is liable to lead to tribal disturbances and create law and order problems is to be allowed to enter this sensitive area.

That is the law. And what is the situation in fact? The result of the activities of the missionaries, states the latest top-level intelligence report "has made a mockery of the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act."

Even castigation in such words by its own intelligence

agencies, has not moved the Government to implement its laws. On the other hand, the missionaries, notes the same intelligence report, have been on a campaign attacking the laws, and demanding relaxation of the Inner Line Regulations!

Thus, assistance from the State to the Church again — though this time assistance of a different sort, and this time assistance to those parts of the Church which are most liable to harm the country.

# 11

# Completing the change

The departure of the British, that is the transfer of political power to persons who could not be depended upon to automatically shield it, impelled the Church to make adjustments of many kinds. To compound the loss of political power in India, the Church in India was buffeted by changes abroad.

At home — that is, in Europe and America — orthodox doctrine was assailed by the growth of rationalism as well as by the developments in science. The new knowledge about the evolution of the universe and its age, Darwin's account of the evolution of man and of the time that process must have taken left nothing, for instance, of the account of Genesis in the Bible. And if one part of it was open to question, its claim to being the revealed Word of God, its claim enforced through the centuries to "literal inerrancy" could stand no longer.

Biblical exegesis had the same consequence. The accounts were so improbable in places, they were so patently contradictory in others that by the time scholarship had travelled from Thomas Paine to Hans Kung and Schillebeeckx, no reasonable man could claim infallibility for the Bible. Recall the instance which is central to missionary work and was mentioned earlier: the words which Jesus is said to have

spoken after his resurrection exhorting Christians to seek followers in all nations, and which were said to be the mandate for missionary work, which were said to make missionary work and conversion an essential element of Christianity — well, those words, scholars of the Bible showed were a later interpolation. The earlier versions of the one Gospel which had them, the later versions acknowledged in footnotes, had not had them!

The history of the Popes and their actual conduct had left little ground for believing that, being the representatives of God on earth, they were infallible. The slipping away of power from Rome, and from the colonial Christian governments left no advantage for continuing with that belief.

Neither the basic text nor the Church could therefore support the claims which had been the very basis of missionary work. The rise of national feeling among non-Christians, and ordinary reason, and closer acquaintance with the teachers and exemplars of other traditions — from the Buddha to Gandhiji — all these made it difficult to continue to insist that there could be no salvation outside the Church, that all these persons were doomed to hell as they had not confessed through the Church to a faith in Christ.

The first aperture came by way of the proposition that good and saintly persons like the Buddha had indeed been saved with retrospective effect by the compassion of Jesus, as the sins of Christians who followed him had been redeemed prospectively by his death. Tolerance was next taken beyond these few individuals. It was now acknowledged that some good was to be found in other religions also. But, as we have seen in the case of Max Muller and others, this concession was immediately hedged in by the elaborations.

What was it that was worthwhile in the other religions? That which was akin to the truths in Christianity. Or in the

alternate, that in them deeper contemplation of which led one to the truths which had been best stated and realised in Christianity.

The other religions thus were given the status of having had occasional glimpses of the truths of Christianity, of having at times approximated those truths — by accident, or by partial sight. Belief in these other religions, and the other religions themselves were made out to have been stages preparatory to Christianity — much as Islam had accorded a recognition to other prophets who had preceded Mohammed, who was the one and only Seal of Prophets.

But rationalism, science, Biblical exegesis, the conduct of the Church — from that of the Vatican, say during the Second World War, to the escapades of American evangelists — as well as the growing knowledge about the insights which other traditions had obtained continued to proceed, and with them went their corrosive effect. Eventually, as we know, the possibility of salvation in each religion has of late been acknowledged by the Vatican.

As we saw in the representative conversations with missionaries that were reproduced earlier, this position is exactly the one Gandhiji had been pleading for. In a sense therefore the traditional Hindu position and the position of the Church have come closer.

### *Closer to Gandhi, Farther from the Church?*

But that very shift completely knocks the bottom out of many an activity of the Church. To take the most obvious: if salvation is possible in each religion, what is the ground for conversion?

The shift has accordingly caused the greatest unsettling within the Church in India. This is evident from both the

report of the Secretary and the background paper which were prepared for the Pune Review.

The Secretary's report recalls the decline in the number of conversions and baptisms in 1971-'91, and notes diplomatically, "This phenomena (*sic.*) coincides with the liberal missiological spirit of Vatican II, and All India Seminar on Church in India (1969), Mission Seminar in Nagpur (1971) and Patna Consultation (1973) and later developments" — these being the successive steps by which the Church moved to the more liberal, Gandhian position.

Why is the Charismatic movement so very important and influential all over India, it asks. How is it that thousands of priests and laity, and people of other religions are attracted to charismatic retreats and prayers, it asks. "One of the probable answers," it says, "is that the liberalism and rationalism of the post Vatican II period have not satisfied the religious needs of the masses. Also many missionaries are experiencing a certain amount of meaninglessness and spiritual emptiness after a period of intense social action. The expected imminent liberation and social transformation has not taken place..."

"The most powerful traditional motive of mission — salvation of even one soul," it says, "is weakened with the theology of salvation in each religion."

"Serious tensions between older theology and new theology of mission are observed," the report states. "This is one of the major sources of personnel conflicts, e.g. between Bishop and missionaries; between old priests and young priests; between Rome and local church."

"Because of the prolonged tensions and conflicts between some bishops and missionaries on account of the serious differences of mission theology and mission methods," it continues, "about 10-15% of priests and sisters in a few dioceses left their priesthood and religious life. [Of course

this might not have been the only reason.]"

The background paper which was prepared for the meeting reflects the unsettling effects of the new position just as sharply.

It reiterates what Vatican II acknowledged — that redemption may be attained through other religions too. Where the others used to be looked upon as heathens living in torment, they are now spoken of as ones "in whom the Spirit has also worked wonders." Where the fact that so many were still continuing in their old ways was earlier seen as the challenge that the Lord had put before Christians, as the unkempt field which every Christian was in duty bound to till to garner a "great harvest" for the Church, the fact that the Lord has even till today allowed these others to continue in their old faiths, that fact is now seen as a part of the ineffable mystery of God, and of the way He works to realise His will. The challenge now is not simply to save them by converting them, it is also to comprehend the purpose of God in allowing them to continue in their old beliefs, and in fact also on occasion redeeming them through these beliefs.

This position the Indian Church, following what was accepted at Vatican II, owns, and it is reflected in the paper the C.B.C.I.'s Working Group prepared for the Pune Review. But how deep the acceptance is, and how much unease it has caused breaks through constantly.

The Church has now to face, the paper says, "the *polarity* between two basic truths" : the fact on the one hand that God's love extends to all, that "his saving design extends to all men" — an acknowledgement which the paper dutifully quotes from a pronouncement from Rome ; and on the other hand the need to proclaim that "Christ (is) the Way, the Truth and the Life in whom men find the fulness of religious life and in whom God has recommended all things to himself" —

that need also being from the same source.

Accordingly, the possibility that others may be saved through their own religions is accepted only in a grudging sort of way, the condescension is all too evident. Notice the words the paper quotes from the authority-on-high :

> Those also can attain to ever lasting salvation who *through no fault of their own* do not know the Gospel of Christ and his Church yet sincerely seek God, and moved by grace, strive by their deeds *to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of their conscience.*

At first sight that would allow salvation to the Buddha for, having passed away some hundreds of years before Christ, he remained ignorant of the Gospel of Christ "for no fault of his own." But on a second reading it does not : for the Buddha fails on the second half of the concession — given his doctrines he cannot be counted among the ones who "sincerely seek God..." Gandhiji on the other hand would qualify on this second half of the concession : for he can certainly be deemed to be among the ones who "sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of their conscience." But then the poor man fails on the first count: for it certainly cannot be said of him that he did not know "the Gospel of Christ and his Church" "through no fault of his own." The Gospel was put to him countless number of times for fifty years and, entirely by his own fault, he did not embrace it, and even less the Church !

What is mere misfortune for the Buddha and Gandhi would, if it were strictly adhered to, spell paralysis for the Church. Of course the new doctrine is not being strictly ad-

hered to in practice : otherwise the zeal with which and the means by which conversions are being secured in the North-East would be inexplicable. But even in its notional form, even as a mere possibility the doctrine that salvation is possible outside the Church leaves the latter tremulous.

As others — continuing though they do in their old faiths — are also ones in whom the Spirit works wonders, as these old, hitherto derided faiths too have something of value, the onus now shifts on the Church — to strive to understand them, to strive to engage in a dialogue with them. The Pune Review was itself testimony to the fact that parts of the Church are seeking sincerely to live this new doctrine, that they are making an effort to reach out and engage in dialogue.

But the Church seems to be perceiving the prospect in a spirit of martyrdom, there seems a strong tug of anxiety and apprehension. The image that strikes the C.B.C.I. Working Group as it commends dialogue with other religions is of Jesus on the Cross. The words it uses move one almost to commiseration :

> *Dialogue* : Jesus Christ, emptying himself on the cross in an unconditional surrender to the Father gives us the courage for dialogue. Keeping our hearts fixed on the Christ event, and at the same time opening our minds to the vast and ineffable mystery of God present in the faith-experiences of our sisters and brothers of other faiths, our Christian approach becomes one of hopeful listening to the other and of humble sharing of ourselves....

That there is a vast change from as recent a time as the mid-fifties when Hindu deities were being pilloried is evident. But

so is the tremulous apprehension — in having to dialogue the Church sees itself as having been put in the condition in which Jesus was put when he was nailed to the Cross, or at the least that it *should* put itself in that position and hope to God that there is a purpose in His ineffable mysteries. Given these apprehensions, one can hardly be surprised at what the C.B.C.I. Working Group says have been the effects of the new ecumenical doctrine.

The new openness of the Church ushered in by Vatican II, it says, "was *initially* welcomed with eager expectation and enthusiasm." The new proclamations triggered new thinking, and new initiatives, the paper says: "contextualisation" of missionary work, a greater impetus to adopting local forms, to immersing the Church in the struggles of the people. "However, there is much confusion," it goes on to note. "A certain polarisation takes place concerning the theological foundations of our mission and, consequently, new pastoral approaches. Some cling to the past when the Church was seen as the only possibility of salvation and remain with strategies in keeping with this thinking. They also point at the lack of visible results in numbers of conversions as a result of new theories. Connected with it is also the understanding of mission in terms of institutions and numbers of the faithful. Effective institutional presence as basis for evangelisation is still something rated very high in their mission agenda. Often they also accuse missionaries who seek for new paths of mission as renouncing the true mission of the Church and taking a compromising stand with regards the uniqueness of Christ and Church. Sometimes this attitude is connected with a fundamentalist theology and aggressive pastoral approaches. On the other side, it is true that a number of missionaries have lost the sense of the urgency of mission in an attitude of apathy and indifference

partly due to the prevailing unsettled situation of insecurity."

"Still," it continues, rounding off the assessment a bit, "the lack of zeal cannot be put exclusively at the door of an *unsettled theology*. It may be traced back, at times, to faulty recruitment and deficiencies in formation resulting in the lack of deep personal convictions and firm commitments in some priests, unable to resist the temptations of a consumer- and comfort dominated culture which is accessible to them through the higher social standing of the priest-hood. Many priests want to go to rich countries or, at least, have good bank balance. The lack of a truly committed love to Jesus Christ is more dangerous to the missionary spirit than theological problems."

But the very word it uses in these passages and in the very next paragraph indicates how the Church in India views the changes. It says, "The *unsettled* theological, spiritual and pastoral situation in which we find ourselves has affected the ongoing search for new paths of mission so crucial for the future of the Church in our country. In the search for new paths we have to face the basic issues of Christian faith and life..." "Vatican II is a turning point in the Church's relation to other religions," it says, "the understanding of mission in Vatican II has developed around two focal points — the need for evangelization and the growing appreciation of religions; *however, the inter-relationship between these two nuclei is still in the process of being elaborated.*"

Again, "From a generally negative attitude to other religions, the Church now affirms that God's saving designs extend to all people [NA 1], and that all religions are related to the People of God [LG 16-21]. Consequently the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions [NA 2]. Nevertheless the perennial validity of the missionary mandate of the Church to proclaim Christ is strongly

reiterated *without spelling out the implications of the relationship between evangelization and respect for other religions.*"

And yet again: "Subsequently the implications of both evangelization (see: *Evangelii Nuntiandi*) and dialogue (see: *Dialogue and Proclamation*) are elaborated. *But the crucial issue of the relationship between evangelization and dialogue is left open.*" "This consideration gives rise to very many complex questions which call for great prudence," it quotes the authoritative pronouncement as stating. "Theologians have still to study these important questions in the light of Christian tradition and the Magisterium, so that new paths may be opened". The disorientation, the impatience are palpable.

That is one dilemma, rather one source of many dilemmas: namely, how is one to combine the acknowledgement that salvation is possible in each religion with the claim on which missionary work is wholly dependent, the claim that Christianity is the only religion through which souls can be saved ?

*Further dilemmas*

There are corresponding dilemmas which the "contextualisation" and "localisation" of the Church engender. It is evident that in a world which is so diverse, in a country like India which on its own is so diverse, and which has so many faiths, a Church with just one agenda, with just one form cannot appeal to all. There has therefore been an effort to go native, so to say: the de-Latinisation of rituals — the session of the C.B.C.I. review I had been invited to address began with a *bhajan*, all the Bishops and others joining the chorus, that was followed by the reading of a passage

from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, and that by another *bhajan*, the Bishops and others joining in again; the recruitment of local clergy and their promotion to high office — among the Catholics for instance there are now three Indians who are Cardinals, there are 17 Archbishops, 107 Bishops, 10 Auxiliary Bishops, one and all Indians, the last non-Indian Bishop having retired five years ago; and, most important, championing local issues: "Some of the major social trends in India with which the missionaries are collaborating," says the Secretary's report, "are the following: a) Dalit liberation movement; b) Tribal liberation movement; c) Women's liberation; d) environmental protection."

Three points are noteworthy. First, this Indianisation of the Church contrasts sharply with what every Islamic leader and movement — from Shah Waliullah to Maulana Mawdudi, from the Tabligh movement to those of the fundamentalists today — has been preaching and enforcing: each of these has sought to separate the Muslims from the rest of India, to exorcise all syncretistic practices, to ensure adherence instead to everything — from the mode of dress to rituals — which would differentiate the Muslims from the rest.

Second, in all probability as the decades pass Indianisation of this order will lead the Church to identity itself more and more with the needs of India and of Indians.

But, and that is the third point, the Church is still in transit on this score: as of now these steps towards contextualisation and localisation have had many unsettling effects, they have thrown up many a dilemma.

*Secular involvement*

The sudden emphasis on the environment one day, on women's-lib the next smacks of issue-hunting. And one is

reminded again of the parallel with the communists: the overarching ideology having fallen through, the activists start looking for, discovering, in the end inventing issues to take up, issues that will keep the organization fit and fat, issues championing of which will show that the organization is still striving for the downtrodden.

Even old-fashioned pastoral work, as we have seen earlier, has often taken over : managing all those hospitals, schools etc. has taken up so much of the time and organizational resources of the Church that on its own telling its primary mission has got neglected. This new form of "contextualization" — of immersion in the "struggles of the people" — compounds the problems.

For one thing, as the paper of the C.B.C.I.'s Working Group notes, this sort of a commitment to social change "implies struggle. This conflict sometimes takes on violent expression." The multi-faceted tensions it generates are evident from what the paper says :

> The conflict can be within the Christian community itself as is the case with the Dalit Christian movements in the South, or it can be with oppressive forces irrespective of religions. This results in divisions and polarisations within and outside the Christian community. Deep bonds other than those based on religion are established and solidarity with other groupings strengthened. This gives the impression of jeopardizing the common witnessing and united action. Unity based upon the commitment to the Kingdom and its values can set in motion new alignments and lead to the emergence of new communities which the ecclesiology in practice in the Church in India may be ill equipped to cope with.

Second, once on this road, at each turn the Church has to answer the question : how far should it go ? Should it address itself to battling the specific injustices, to alleviating the poverty, to healing the wounds that the socio-political system inflicts, asks the paper, or is the mission of the Church "to be envisaged in a more radical manner as working and collaborating towards the elimination of those structures and processes which are causative of this poverty and injustice ?" There is no answer of course. On the contrary, that the change has caused dissonance and tensions within the Church is all too manifest. Summarising the results of "The Church's opening to the Secular Realities," the C.B.C.I. Working Group's paper says :

- ❒ The inclusion of the secular realities in the scope of the Church's mission in Vatican II has led to a wide involvement in social and development activities for the good of the people. It led, however, also to tensions and conflicts at different levels.
- ❒ Some regions are slow in responding to the call to social responsibility, out of fear to the risks involved.
- ❒ Others tend to the extreme of considering social involvement the primary goal of the Church's mission and developing it at the expense of the spiritual core and the comprehensive scope of the Christian message.

*Localisation*

There is in addition the other problem with "contextualisation", with going national. For 150 years even as it served the interests of British imperialism, the Church tried to orient its Indian adherents away from Indian nationalism. Its publications invariably dubbed Indian nationalism as "Hindu nationalism". They pooh-poohed the universalism

of the Hindu texts — the universalism which Gandhiji and others were all the time emphasising, they dismissed the affirmations in these texts that God is one, that all paths lead to Him, they scoffed at and dismissed these as the empty "utopian expectations of non-Christian religions." That difficulty persists. For the peremptory duty cast upon a missionary is in regard to the Church, not in regard to the locality or country in which a particular church happens to be situated. By the very ideology therefore it is just not possible for the Church — any more than it is for the Islamic preacher, or was for the communist — to abandon its trans-national, its "universal" character.

Financially, ideologically or, if you prefer, "spiritually", and organizationally too, the promotions of Indian personnel to higher posts notwithstanding, the Church has remained tied to the Church in Rome, and to Churches elsewhere. The Second Vatican Council for instance, as we have seen, has turned the Church in India inside out. But the Church in India made almost no contribution to the reformulations and decisions of the Council — the Council was an almost wholly European affair, with some contributions from the U.S. and Latin America. The dependence of the Indian Church comes through in the Secretary's Report too. Recall what he recorded for the Pune Review: "With the Post-Vatican new theology of the local Church, bishop is the final authority — responsible for proclamation. If he is not seriously interested, there is no authority in India with a common vision and coordinating authority to direct proclamation. The traditional role of *Propaganda Fide* is not replaced by anyone in India. We are at a state of fragmentation. The CBCI Commission for Proclamation has no legal authority. Who will coordinate the work of Proclamation at all-India level ?"

The paper which the C.B.C.I. Working Group had pre-

pared for the Pune Review, and which is reproduced as Annexure II, provides many a ready example : at every turn it feels compelled to fortify what it is saying by a sentence from this document or that issued from Rome, exactly as the communist parties used to feel compelled to fortify themselves with sentences from texts put out from Moscow and Peking.

But the ground-situation is a demanding master: and so, in spite of the history of the Church in India, in spite of the basic ideological and spiritual position of Christianity, in spite of the continuing transnational links and dependence of the Church, "contextualisation", localisation, in a word going native and national is what the Church has had to undertake.

But the more the Church merges in the locality the greater the danger that it may be submerged by it. This apprehension breaks through in the Secretary's report. "Cardinal Josef Tomko in his address to the Cardinals in Rome on 4-5 April 1991," the Secretary's report records, "accused India as an epicentre of new heresies. The emerging mission theology of India is much suspected by some members of the hierarchy in India." "Regionalism/ethnocentrism is on the increase, e.g. Dalit movements, tribal movements, rite conflicts etc.," says the report listing some of the very "movements" which it had earlier listed approvingly as the trends "with which the missionaries are collaborating". And then it points to the dilemma: "The catholicity and universality of the mission is a danger (sic.)." The text as it was distributed would imply that the catholicity and universality of the mission are a danger *to* these movements; perhaps what the Secretary meant was that the more the Church adapts itself to collaborate with these movements the more the catholicity and universality of the mission are *in* danger. Either way, the dilemma comes through.

The dilemmas break through just as clearly in the paper which the C.B.C.I.'s Working Group prepared for the Pune Review. "The building of a truly local Church has become an urgent and primary task in our mission agenda," it says. "The Church in India has to die to become fully incarnate in the life of the people, seeking communion with all, renouncing all traits of foreignness and isolation and shedding the past identity which was an 'identity-through-separation'..." The Church it says must follow the example of Jesus, incarnating itself as thoroughly in the local, Indian community as Jesus incarnated the Word. "In searching paths of mission," it emphasizes, "inculturation should not be understood merely as an optional endeavour, but as essential to her mission. The radical questioning of the foreignness of our identity should not be left to those who oppose Christianity. It must begin with the missionary Church itself..."

The extreme compulsion which the strong "local" identity of India imposes is evident : "an urgent and primary task..," "...the Church has to die to become...." But the paper itself reveals how the precise balance that has to be struck is far from clear, that the issue remains a contentious one. The very question it asks the Church to determine nails the point: "Can we have evangelization without inculturation?," it asks the Church to consider ; furthermore, giving us a glimpse of debates going on within the Church, it asks the Church to assess, "Is inculturation a strategy or has it a place in the very heart of the evangelizing ministry of the Church ?"

But surely localization, inculturation — these are just a *method* of evangelization : surely, the Church is not to become just a local cultural troupe. Even that however does not settle what and how much has to be done in operational terms. The paper is reduced to a mere recitation of words.

Should evangelization come first or "inculturation" ?, asks

the paper raising what must obviously be a point of some contention in the Church. Only to conclude that the two "have to go hand in hand".

To what extent must the Church adopt what are obviously the pre-Christian, the pre-revelation, the heathen ways of the locality ? Again, that is a matter which has caused much contention, indeed, as we have seen earlier, it is something that goes to the heart of the claims of missionaries *vis a vis* Hinduism : many of the practices which today characterize the Church are the very ones for which it had been calumnising Hinduism ever since it came to India. So, the question is a grave and urgent one. But the answer of the paper, reflecting as it does the dilemmas in which the Church is caught, ends up as just words. "The Church must seek to share whatever is genuinely human among its people," the paper says, "even assume the weaknesses and failings present in a culture in order to heal and enable it, following the sound principle that nothing is redeemed unless it is first assumed." Not only does that leave every operational question open — Is idolatry a part of "whatever is genuinely human," is *Tantra*, is belief in magic? — the sentences that follow are bound to confound the one who is seeking practical guidance. "It is clear that inculturation of the Church does not mean adopting archaic forms of cultural expressions of a dominant culture," says the paper : the only thing which is clear in that is that the allusion is to Hinduism, but it is certainly not clear what in it is archaic in the eyes of the Church. The idol of Vishnu, but not the idol of Mary ? Turning the beads, but not clutching the Cross ? The notion of caste, but not the demand by the Church that reservations etc. be extended to Christians who are Scheduled Castes ? "On the contrary," concludes the paper on the point, "a greater urgency is felt in inculturating the Church in the 'little

traditions' of the marginalised sections of our society." Again, what the paper is driving at is clear, it is exactly what the Church has been trying to do for hundreds of years : to "inculturate" itself in the "little traditions" — to go tribal among the tribals, to don the ways and practices of Harijans among Harijans — so as to "undermine, encircle, and finally storm" the "dominant culture" — Hinduism in this case. But to what extent these practices of the "marginalised", these things which are "genuinely human" in those belonging to the "little traditions" the Church should adopt is not clear : how much of the "Animism" should it don? And were it to merely don the Animism, would that not be mere subterfuge, would it not be what the paper itself calls a mere "strategy" ? On the other hand, if the Church were to genuinely internalize the Animism of the "little traditions", what would be left of it ?

The dilemma remains unresolved : to the extent that the Church merely dons these "archaic forms of cultural expressions" say of the tribals, the "inculturation" remains an artifice, a device; to the extent that it genuinely internalizes them, it forfeits its mission !

*Completing the change*

We thus have three trends:

- ❒ From calumny to expressions of empathy;
- ❒ From the claim to being the sole possessors of Truth to an ecumenism;
- ❒ From uniformity to "contextualisation".

And with each of these we have a great unsettling, a series of dilemmas that are yet to be resolved.

When will we know that they have been resolved ? When

will we know that the Church has truly shifted to an ecumenical position? Five things will work as litmus.

First, we will know that the Church has truly changed when it undertakes and disseminates an honest accounting of the calumnies it heaped on India and on Hinduism. By an accounting I do not of course mean some declaration saying, "Sorry". By an accounting I mean that the calumnies would be listed; the grounds on which they were based would be listed, and the Church would declare whether, in the light of what is known now, the grounds were justified or not; and the motives which impelled those calumnies would be exhumed.

The second thing to look for would be the extent to which the Church acquaints Christians in India as well as the groups it is aiming at with the results of scholarly work on the two central claims of the Church — that the Bible is the revealed word of God, that it is wholly free of error; and that the Church, in particular the Pope is infallible. The scholarly work has blown craters in these claims. The results of that work are central to the faith of those who have already been converted. Equally, they are things which a person weighing whether or not he should become a Christian must know. The extent to which the Church imparts this information would therefore be a good indication of the extent to which the Church has actually internalised the new openness and humility which it has proclaimed.

Similarly, developments in various sciences have caused a sea-shift in what is sustainable and what is not in regard to creation, evolution, the division between man and other forms of life, between mind and matter. The third bit of litmus would therefore be: what is the extent to which the Church in India is disseminating information among its flock and its target groups about the consequences these develop-

ments have for its basic premises?

The fourth bit of litmus would be the extent to which the Church overcomes its present tremulous anxieties regarding dialogue and the opening up to other faiths. And that would happen only when what is today just a grudging acknowledgement that salvation is possible through other faiths becomes an acceptance, when the current condescension and grudging admission — those "who through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ and his Church," those who "strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them..." — give way to a wholehearted acceptance of the fact that reality is indeed multilayered, that there are many ways to perceiving it, that each must assess for himself by an inner-directed search which way is liable to be the most effective for him or her at that time....

Finally, of course there is the question of conversions. In view of the fact, now proclaimed by the Church, that salvation is possible in each religion, what is the ground for converting people to Christianity, in particular by the sorts of means which we saw are in use in the North-East to this day? The litmus test of the new ecumenism would therefore be the extent to which the Church brings its traditional zeal for saving souls through conversion in line with this new acknowledgement.

# "But have we no right?"

"*But have we no right to proclaim our faith, to preach the Gospel? You are the editor of such a large newspaper. You express your views on issues. Do we not have the same right ?*" It was Bishop George Anathil, of Indore, the Chairman of the Commission for Proclamation and Communication of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India.

It so happens that I am not the editor but the twice-dismissed editor of such a large newspaper! And I would certainly stand for the right of every Bishop to speak his mind, assuming of course that he too would not cavil at being dismissed !!

In any case, no one is suggesting that missionaries should not have the right to proclaim the truth as they see it. I was talking about conversions — about how these did not harmonize with the doctrine the Church has now acknowledged, namely the possibility of salvation in every religion; about the need to heed the great anger which is building up against conversions; and about the need therefore to join in giving the State and the courts the authority to examine whether force or fraud or allurement have been used in any case to secure the conversion.

The analogy which Bishop Anathil drew between the right to free speech and the right to practise and propagate

one's religion is actually a good one: the freedom of religion guaranteed by Articles 25 and 26 of the Constitution should be subject to the same sorts of restrictions as is a secular right like freedom of speech. Article 19(2) lists the grounds on which the right to speech can be regulated. These are much wider than the grounds mentioned in Articles 25 and 26. Furthermore, the courts have, to take one instance, specifically held that the administration of "minority institutions" under Articles 29 and 30 *cannot* be regulated on the ground that the regulation is required in the national interest.

In a secular country, why should the right to practise and propagate religion not be subjected to the same sorts of perimeters as apply to other secular rights? In a country the very survival of which is in such jeopardy, in a country the territorial integrity of which is being assailed by murderous campaigns stoked in the name of religion, why should the right to practise and propagate religion in such a country not be subject to the requirements of the security of the State, to the national interest? It is for these reasons that both in *Indian Controversies* and in *A Secular Agenda* I have urged that the right to religion must be placed, exactly as Bishop Anathil's analogy suggests, at par with, and no higher than other secular rights.

"*I have a comment, more than a question*", Bishop Patrick D'Souza of Varanasi observed. "*I know that Gandhiji said those things about the motives behind missionary services like education, medical services etc. But schools and hospitals set up by Christian missionaries are everywhere. If there was any truth in this view, all of India would by now have become Christian. This has not happened. Is not the accusation itself motivated?*"

My own experience would point to what you say: I studied at a college set up by Christian missionaries, no one ever

tried to convert me. But against that, and against what you say we must put what the missionaries who talked to Gandhiji acknowledged. They too were truthful, and they stated in clear terms that the ultimate motive, or inspiration if you like, which informed such work was to convert people to Christianity. Moreover, the impressions of persons of my generation date from a time when India had been independent for many years: no missionary would have been so imprudent as to calumnize Hinduism the way missionaries used to do two generations earlier, even in the early fifties; no missionary organization functioning in a metropolitan city would have thought it prudent to attempt conversions overtly; that there were asides and suggestions is within the memory of even this generation — as often by *ayahs* as by others, and as unrelenting as drops on a stone — which pooh-poohed every Indian, specially Hindu notion and practice — from putting oil in one's hair to religious observances. In a word, the security of imperial power led scholars and missionaries to be candid in the nineteenth century; political power having gone that kind of candour too has gone, and so what is said and done overtly is no longer as good a guide as it was a hundred years ago. Even more important, there are the basic premises of the Church to which I drew attention earlier: that there is one Truth, that it has been revealed to the one and only Son of God, that it is in one Book etc. A missionary cannot but subscribe to these premises. And one who subscribes to them cannot but have one over-riding objective: to save souls by bringing them into the Church.

As for all of India not having got converted, that may have happened not because of the missionaries' altruism but in spite of their determination. Conversions relied most of all on the power and tilt of the State. And the nature of the State had changed by the time missionary activity got in full swing.

The contrast with the wider spread of Islam in India testifies to the point. The State at that time was ruthless. Non-believers hardly had any rights. Imagine what would happen if today we retained the very Constitution we have but added one Article: that the rights guaranteed by the Constitution would be available only to Hindus. Within two generations most of the converts would return to being Hindus. But the position of Dhimmies was exactly that: non-believers had few rights, and the few that they nominally had they had only so long as the Muslim chieftain or ruler suffered them to have those rights. That is how — and of course, even more directly because of the sword — so many became Muslims.

But by the time Christian missionary work took roots here, notions about what the State could or could not do had changed — in England most of all. Non-Christians therefore had greater protection under the law under British rule than in Muslim times. The compulsion to convert was accordingly less.

Therefore, while I see the point of Bishop D'Souza's observation, there probably are other explanations for the fact that all of India has not converted.

"*I agree that in the past missionaries said things that were wrong*", said Bishop Thomas Menamparampil of Guwahati. "*But we are made to suffer for that every day. For instance, missionaries are often accused for the political unrest in the North-East. In fact, there are only a small number of Christians among the political activists there. An unfair share of blame is put on the Christians. What is your opinion on this matter?*"

For one thing, intelligence agencies speak specifically of the role of missionaries in stoking the unrest in the North-East. They point for instance to the role of the American Baptist Church in instigating and helping some of the princi-

pal secessionist bodies in that area — the N.S.C.N., and others. The role of the Church in Mizoram is directly political.

But assume that the charge is unfair. The way to meet it is to be in the forefront of combatting secessionism and violence in that area. Is the Church active on that count?

You may say, "That won't be any use. It will be regarded as just a ploy, a device to deceive." But surely the followers of Jesus must act in the faith that, though an allegation may persist for a while, eventually the light of truth shall shine through.

"*But in the North-East, there is not just the opportunity to convert people to Christianity,*" said a participant. "*There is humanity crying out to find full expression. Should we not help them?*"

But isn't there humanity in Delhi, to say nothing of the U.S. and U.K., which is crying to find full expression? What is the urgency which leads you to conclude that the people in the North-East must be saved, that they must be enabled to find full expression this very month? In any case, if the urgency is so great that you just cannot keep from working there, the least that you should then be prepared to bear is an unfair charge, and scrutiny.

Today, spurred by the new "Liberation Theology", the Church is spurring movements among so-called Dalits etc. But many of the leaders you have patronised by way of helping "Dalits" speak with poison in their tongue. They advocate hatred. They have been eulogising Bhindranwale. Now, when you patronise them, why do you cavil at the charge that you are patronising them? How can you escape the constructive responsibility for the consequences of the hatred they are spreading? In a word: if you feel that you just must work among such groups because as Christian missionaries you have both some special responsibility and some

special message for such groups, hold them to the means of Jesus, of Gandhi.

"*Your view that religious questions should only be addressed to those who can decide, I found patronising*," a participant observed. "*There is the presumption behind it that the tribals etc. are not in a position to understand these matters. But in working among them I find that they get the central point very quickly.*"

Would you concede the same discernment to "Dalits" who have "relapsed" back to Hinduism — that they too are able to get the central point very quickly? Or is it that only those who see the point of Christianity are in a position to assess religious questions, and not the others?

As for presumptions, look at the premise behind the entire work of the Church in tribal areas. The tribals are leading a perfectly normal life with the help of their own religion, are they not? When you go in to convert them, are you not being presumptuous — are you not presuming that you and the Church know better than they what is good for them?

"*You were educated in a Christian College*," Archbishop Alphonsus Mathias of Bangalore remarked. "*What aspects of Jesus strike you?*"

That he was prepared to suffer so much, that he was prepared to suffer to the end for truth. That no bitterness entered his heart even when he had been nailed to the Cross. That, when he saw wrong, he spoke so clearly — as to the Pharisees in the temple.

"*No, I mean: What is your opinion about the Christian claim that Jesus is the incarnate God?*"

I have not the capacity to judge such a claim. But as, for the sorts of reasons I mentioned at the outset, I am not yet able to believe in God as He has been pictured to us — All Powerful, All Knowing, All Compassionate — I am not able

to conceive of that God incarnating Himself.

"*In one of your recent articles you wrote about nanotechnology and the rest,*" said a participant. "*What role do you think religious organizations have in such an age?*"

To remind us about, to educate us to the inner-directed search. That is the pearl of great price which the religious traditions, specially the religious traditions of India have preserved through the millennia. That is what religious organisations should direct their efforts to.

*The persistence of questions*

The exchange continued, well beyond the time that had been allotted. The reader familiar with the conversations which missionaries had with Gandhiji will be struck by how what these worthy men were saying now corresponded almost to the word to the questions that they used to ask sixty-seventy years ago of Gandhiji. And of course he would be reminded of how apt the answers Gandhiji gave then are to this very day.

The Church spoke of the spiritual hunger among Harijans, about how they were coming to Christianity impelled by that hunger, "And no power on earth can stem that tide," it declared. Under no circumstances, it declared, would the Church forsake its duty and its right "to receive such people into itself from whatever religious groups they may come."

As regards the assertion about Harijans — exactly at par with what was said about humanity in the North-East yearning to find full expression — Gandhiji observed, "Men and women do not seek fellowship of the Christian Church. Poor Harijans are no better than the others. I wish they had spiritual hunger. Such as it is, they satisfy by visits to the temples,

however crude they may be. When the missionary of another religion goes to them, he goes like any other vendor of goods. He has no special spiritual merit that will distinguish him from those to whom he goes. He, however, possesses material goods which he promises to those who will come to his fold."

And as for the right — recall the remark of Bishop Anathil with which we began — he added, "Then mark, the duty of the Christian Church in India turns into a right. Now when a duty becomes a right, it ceases to be a duty... The duty of taking the spiritual message is performed by the messenger becoming a fit vehicle by prayer and fasting. Conceived as a right it may easily become an imposition on unwilling parties... In the spiritual sphere, there is no such thing as right."[1]

"Why may I not share with others my experience of Jesus Christ which has given me such ineffable peace?," a missionary asked. Gandhiji replied, "Because you cannot possibly say that what is best for you is best for all... And again, is it not superarrogance to assume that you alone possess the key to spiritual joy and peace, and that an adherent of a different faith cannot get the same in equal measure from a study of his scriptures? I enjoy a peace and equanimity of spirit which has excited the envy of many Christian friends. I have got it principally through the Gita." "Your difficulty lies in your considering the other faiths as false or so adulterated as to amount to falsity," he continued. "And you shut your eyes to the truth that shines in other faiths and which gives equal joy and peace to their votaries." "What would be your message to a Christian like me and my fellows?," asked the missionary. How apt was

[1] *Collected Works*, Volume 65, pp. 47-8.

Gandhiji's reply: "Become worthy of the message that is imbedded in the Sermon on the Mount and join the spinning brigade."[2]

What is your guidance for us, another missionary asked him a while later. "All I can say," Gandhiji replied, "is that there should be less of theology and more of truth in all that you say and do." Would he explain that, the missionary asked. "How can I explain the obvious?," Gandhiji remarked. "Among agents of the many untruths that are propounded in the world one of the foremost is theology. I do not say that there is no demand for it. There is a demand in the world for many a questionable thing."[3]

My mission is to spread the gospel of Christ, a missionary told Gandhiji. And asked: what is the most effective way of preaching it?

"To live the gospel is the most effective way," said Gandhiji, "most effective in the beginning, in the middle and in the end. Preaching jars on me and makes no appeal to me, and I get suspicious of missionaries who preach. But I love those who never preach but live the life according to their lights. Their lives are silent yet most effective testimonies. Therefore I cannot say what to preach, but I can say that a life of service and uttermost simplicity is the best preaching. If, therefore, you go on serving people and ask them also to serve, they would understand. But you quote instead John 3, 16 and ask them to believe it.[4] That has no appeal to me, and I am sure people will not understand it. Where there has been acceptance of the gospel through preaching, my complaint is that there has been some motive."

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[2] *Collected Works*, Volume 71, pp. 79-80.

[3] *Collected Works*, Volume 71, pp. 328.

[4] *John* 3.16 says, 'For God loved the world so much that he sent his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.'

"But we also see it and we try our best to guard against it," the missionary retorted.

"But you can't guard against it," said Gandhiji. "One sordid motive vitiates the whole preaching. It is like a drop of poison which fouls the whole food. Therefore I should do without any preaching at all. A rose does not need to preach. It simply spreads its fragrance. The fragrance is its own sermon. If it had human understanding and if it could engage a number of preachers, the preachers would not be able to sell more roses than the fragrance itself could do. The fragrance of religious and spiritual life is much finer and subtler than that of the rose."

"But all this," records Mahadev Desai, "apparently failed to be of effect and the reverend gentlemen retired with the imprecation,.... 'Mr. Gandhi... soon there will come a day when you will be judged, not in your righteousness, but in the righteousness of Jesus.'"[5]

But what is your attitude to Jesus, the missionaries would always come around to asking Gandhiji. He was a great world-teacher among others, Gandhiji would say. His sacrifice is an example to all. But that he was the greatest, I cannot accept. He had not for instance the compassion of the Buddha, Gandhiji would recount.

But what about his being God-incarnate, the Son of God, the missionaries would always come around to asking Gandhiji. I do not take the words literally, Gandhiji would say: Jesus was the son of God only in the sense that we are all children of God, God has endowed us all with the capacity to attain the heights Jesus did, if only we would put in the effort. The belief that Jesus is the only begotten son of God is to me contrary to Reason, for God cannot marry and beget

[5] *Collected Works*, Volume 60, p. 323.

children, he would explain. I should find it hard to believe in the literal meaning of the verses relating to the immaculate conception of Jesus, he would say, nor would it deepen my regard for Jesus if I gave those verses their literal meaning.... The word 'son' can only be used in a figurative sense, he would explain. In that sense everyone who stands in the position of Jesus is the begotten son of God. If a man is spiritually miles ahead of us we may say that he is in a special sense the son of God, though we are all children of God.

But what about the miracles, the missionaries would then ask him. "I do not need," he would reply, "either the prophecies or miracles to establish Jesus's greatness as a teacher. Nothing can be more miraculous than the three years of his ministry. There is no miracle in the story of the multitudes fed on a handful of loaves. A magician can create that illusion. But woe worth the day on which a magician would be hailed as the Saviour of humanity. As for Jesus raising the dead to life, well, I doubt if the men he raised were really dead.... The laws of Nature are changeless, unchangeable, and there are no miracles in the sense of infringement or interruption of Nature's laws."

How the questions persist to our day. And how telling his answers remain to our day.

*An example to us*

"It has been a feast," said Dr. P. Ramachandran, formerly of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, who had been presiding over the session, as he wound up the exchange. As we dispersed for tea the exchanges continued, as did the banter: "He knows more about Christianity than your students," Archbishop Mathias of Bangalore told Bishop Valerian D'Souza of Pune, teasing him and me. "He knows more

about Christianity," said the latter who oversees one of the best seminaries in our country, "than many of our professors !"....

The things I had been saying were hardly the things that the Archbishop, the Bishops and the scholars assembled there agreed with, they were certainly not the things that they would find agreeable. But, as I recalled at the beginning, they heard me out in pin-drop silence, and with unbroken patience. They told me unambiguously that they did not agree with what I had said. Several of their observations left no doubt that they were put out by what I had said. But they pasted no motive. They were courteous and the very models of dignity and decorum throughout.

I left feeling I had been among friends.

If only we could learn at least this one thing from them: if we could only learn how to disagree. How much better off our country would be.

# Annexures
# Assessments by the Church

*Note* : So that the reader may see the situation faithfully through the eyes of the Church, the papers have been reproduced exactly as they were distributed at the Pune Review of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India. The content and language of the papers will also enable the reader to glimpse the condition in which the Church is today as an organization.

I

# Trends and Issues in Evangelization in India

Based on the CBCI Survey Reports
Augustine Kanjamala SVD, CBCI Secretary

## I. Trends in Numerical Conversions

01. All over India numerical conversion was on regular increase for nearly 100 years until 1961-71 period.
02. Conversion and baptisms are on the decline during the 1971-91 period.
03. This phenomena coincides with the liberal missiological spirit of Vatican II, and All India Seminar on Church in India [1969], Mission Seminar in Nagpur [1971] and Patna Consultation [1973] and later developments.
04. The only major exception is the North East area where the traditional trend is continuing, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh. [On the Global level too the trend of decline is noted with the exception of Africa and South Korea].
05. Dalit conversions are also on the decline, after the period of mass conversion. A large number of Dalit Catholics have left the church for various reasons, including socio-economic benefits from the government.
06. Christianity is a minority of 2.6% [1.8% Catholics].

## II. Methods and Ways of Proclamation

01. A new emphasis on Proclaiming Jesus Christ and his Gospels. This leads to less emphasis on traditional Church institutions and doctrines, e.g. charismatic groups.
02. *Ad Intra*: Charismatic Proclamation. Retreat movement starting in

Potta, Kerala. During the past decade many lakhs have participated.

- ❒ Potta team is traveling and preaching outside Kerala [India and abroad].
- ❒ Powerful form of witnessing, praying and healing.
- ❒ Many non-Christians actively participate and give witness. Some ask for baptism.
- ❒ *Criticism* : A few dioceses don't give entry to the team.
  : Great emotionalism. Will this last for a long time?
  : Why is it that the Charismatic movement is very popular and influential all over India? How is it that thousands of priests, religious, laity and people of other religions are attracted to charismatic retreats and prayers?
  : One of the probable answers is that the liberalism and rationalism of the post Vatican II period have not satisfied the religious needs of the masses. Also many missionaries are experiencing a certain amount of meaninglessness and spiritual emptiness after a period of intense social action. The expected imminent liberation and social transformation has not taken place. People are looking for religious experience which is the main feature of charismatic gatherings.
  : Even if the charismatic movement may be short lived, two lessons from this experience will be lasting: [1] spirituality is the foundation of mission work; [2] mission must emphasise community experience and community building. Too much individualism is the enemy of genuine mission work. Emphasis on team work and community building are integral to evangelization.
  : In some places where the school of evangelization is conducted, some Hindus and Muslims strongly react to the missionaries who went from house to house.

03. *Ad Extra*: Interest in direct proclamation of Jesus and his Gospel seems to be on the decline in general. [R.M.2] Findings of our survey in various dioceses support this view.

- ❒ The most powerful traditional motive of mission - salvation of even one soul is weakened with the theology of salvation in each religion [LG. 16; NA].
- ❒ With the legitimation of dialogue, and work of liberation as constitutive dimensions of mission, emphasis shifts to witness and presence; particularly among the poor and oppressed.
- ❒ Among the three models of evangelization [ecclesiocentric, christocentric, kingdom of God centred], Christo-centrism is the most powerful motivation of missionaries. Around 60-65% of the missionaries consider that making Christ known is their top priority.
- ❒ The second priority is the promotion of the values of the kingdom of God [15-20%]. This is not the first priority as some theologians seem to advocate. Naturally these are inter-related.
- ❒ Ecclesio-centrism gets only the third priority. Only 10-15% of the missionaries are considering this as their first priority.

III. Institutionalization V/s Proclamation - Pastoral Work

01. The old Churches are very busy and burdened with administration, and pastoral work. They have little time for proclamation Ad Gentes.
    - ❒ During the last 40 years dioceses have grown into 125 [56 in 1950].
    - ❒ Dispensaries and hospitals have increased to 10 fold.
    - ❒ Growth of high schools is sixfold.
    - ❒ Colleges and institutions of higher learning increased 10 fold.
    - ❒ Preoccupation with administration diminishes the quality of Christian witness.
    - ❒ As a consequence many Church institutions appear to the public as centres of power, money and prestige.

02. In North India - so called mission territory - is passing through the process of deepening faith and institution building, e.g. Chotanagpur with 9% of India's Catholics. Mission Ad Gentes is almost disappearing.
03. 60% of priests, 69% of sisters and 56% brothers are concentrated in South India which has only 25% of India's population. The rest of the mission areas suffer from shortage of personnel. During last 30 years there is a small shift in the concentration of missionaries in favour of the North. The number of the foreign missionaries is fast shrinking.

04. In the north-east conversions among the tribals continues. During the last 30 years the Catholic population increased 9 fold to 9 lakhs. The quality of their life and witness has yet to develop.
05. In Arunachal Pradesh about 10,000 people join the Church per year; half of them into the Catholic Church. No priest or religious live here. The laity is actively involved in proclamation. It seems that where the clerics are in big numbers, the laity has less organized opportunity for proclamation. New charismatic movement is partly a reaction to institutionalization/clericalization. Sects are becoming very attractive especially in those areas the Church is highly organized.

    Decline in eccelesio-centrism implies a decline in Church authorities, e.g. Bishops. There are reactions to this trend.
06. Proclamation through mass media. Around 65% of the communication centres and trained personnel are in South India. In the north where it is most needed, it is not much promoted. Radio Veritas and Radio Sri Lanka are well received. Missio is not satisfied with the contribution of the CBCI to Radio Veritas.
07. Catholic Information/enquiry Centres.

    There are 35 centres, half of which are in South India. Why few centres in the North? Till 1985, on the average 40-50 thousand enquiries were made in these centres per year. On the average 30 adult conversions per year from these groups. In recent years the number of enquiries have not increased. In 1991 there were 43, 432 enquiries out of which 61% were in South India and 20.6% were in the Hindi belt [North].

IV. Problems and Issues from Outside

01. During the past 200 years large number of Hindus/Muslims in general have said "Yes" to Jesus: [Neo-Hinduism] but "No" to Sociological conversion and visible membership in the Church.
02. RSS/VHP: Hindu Fundamentalism is on the increase [Hindutva].
03. Recently thousands, of tribal converts are reported to be reconverted to Hinduism. *[India Today,* May 15]. It seems to be a VHP propaganda stunt. However the M.P. Bishops have confirmed that about 2000 Catholics relapsed. Some under fear and pressure. Similar conversions were reported from Islam to Hinduism in Rajasthan *[Illustrated Weekly of India,* May 9-15, 1992]. Some Dalit converts are going back since they lose the benefits of being a SC [Dalits]. There are other pockets of small gains in quantita-

tive terms.

04. The recent rise of religious fundamentalism and communalism is also characterized by an increased animosity towards the Christian missionaries. There were many incidents of burning of the churches, physical assaults on priests and sisters, attacks on christian families in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, U.P. and elsewhere during the year 1993.
05. Most of our primary proclamation is to tribals and Dalits. The traditional problem of proclamation to 70% of the population, Hindus, is a major concern.
06. The amount of literature published on inter-religious dialogue is enormous. However, the practice of inter-religious dialogue is not very significant except for the organized dialogue meetings by the CBCI commission among the very educated urban elites, and also by a very small number of missionaries.

V. A Few Major Problems

01. Cardinal Josef Tomko in his address to the Cardinals in Rome, on 4-5 April 1991, accused India as an epicentre of new heresies. The emerging mission theology of India is much suspected by some members of the hierarchy in India.
02. The charismatic movement seems to be a restatement of traditional mission and proclamation. Will it lead to fundamentalism in the sensitive fundamentalistic ethos of present day India?
03. Rite conflicts seem to be a major scandal. Instead of being a sign of unity, it is a sign of division. Proclamation of Jesus is at cross roads. Many priests and lay people are losing faith in the leadership of some Bishops. Lack of credibility due to rite tensions [See the letter of admonition from the Holy Father in November 1993].
04. With the Post Vatican new theology of the local Church, bishop is the final authority responsible for proclamation. If he is not seriously interested, there is no authority in India with a common vision and coordinating authority to direct proclamation. The traditional role of Propaganda Fide is not replaced by anyone in India. We are at a state of fragmentation. The CBCI Commission for Proclamation has no legal authority. Who will coordinate the work of Proclamation at all India level?
05. Serious tensions between older theology and new theology of mission are observed. This is one of the major sources of personnel conflicts, e.g. between Bishop and missionaries, between old

priests and young priests, between Rome and local church.

06. Because of the prolonged tensions and conflicts between some bishops and missionaries on account of the serious differences of mission theology and mission methods, about 10-15% of priests and sisters in a few dioceses left their priesthood and religious life. [Of course this might not have been the only reason.]
07. Good number of missionaries, particularly in the Hindi belt with poor response to the Gospel, feel frustrated.
08. A close affinity between the prevailing mission theology and the response/non-response of the people is noted.
09. Those priests and missionaries who are involved in enough pastoral work have little time for evangelization. Therefore it is necessary that a few people are set apart exclusively for proclamation. In theory the principle that the whole church is missionary sounds attractive. In practice this seems to be rather improbable. All don't have the charisma for primary proclamation.
10. It is good that each parish and each diocese set apart a particular territory for concentrated efforts for evangelization. The territorial concept of the mission should further be contextualized in each diocese and each parish.
11. India is highly person-oriented society. Personal contact much become an important method of evangelization. With the availability of modern transport facilities the contact between missionaries and the people are on the decline.
12. Sisters are showing more interest in village visits. The mission of the future will not be as sacrament oriented as in the past [e.g. Baptism, Mass, Confession etc]. Thus Sisters/Brothers have more opportunities for mission work.
13. Inspite of the theology of people of God, in the old churches the style of exercising authority in the church seems to be pre-Vatican. Many bishops function as bureaucrats. Often the quality of relations does not inspire trust in the leadership nor is it favourable for building communities.
14. Missionaries spend little time for collective reflection on their mission theology and mission methods. There seems to be a lot of action with inadequate reflection - prayer.
15. Some of the major social trends in India with which the missionaries are collaborating are the following:
    a] Dalit liberation movement;
    b] Tribal liberation movement;

c] Women's liberation;
d] Environmental protection.

16. Most dangerous social and political phenomenon in India today are:
    a] Communalism
    b] Crime and violence
    c] Corruption
    d] Consumerism among the elite and neo-rich.
    Church seems to be either inactive or helpless in these situations.
17. Women: Religious/lay women will play more decisive role in the mission than priests.
18. The number of Indian missionaries going to foreign mission is on the increase.
19. With the decline of communism/socialism in the West, there is a decline in the radical mission approaches of 1975-1985. A reversal to institutionalized mission is observed, e.g. setting up more English medium schools. The poor will continue to suffer.
20. Transfer of Bishops creates weak loyalties from the priests, particularly the diocesan clergy.
21. Frequent transfers of Sisters from State to State weakens their commitment and relation to a particular community. The Indian society functions more at affective levels than at rational level.
22. Regionalism/ethnocentrism is on the increase, e.g. Dalit movements, tribal movements, rite conflicts etc. The catholicity and universality of the mission is a danger.
23. 97% of the Indians [Asians] are finding their salvation and God without any direct contact with the Christian mission. Mission theology and missionary methods are undergoing radical changes in India. This is the real context of our missionary reflection.

TRENDS AND ISSUES IN EVANGELIZATION IN INDIA
BASED ON THE CBCI SURVEY REPORTS
Augustine Kanjamala SVD, CBCI Secretary

I. Trends in Numerical Conversions
Number and Percentage of Christians 1951-81

| Cultural Zones & States | 1951 | | 1961 | | 1971 | | 1981 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| 1. South Zone | | | | | | | | |
| A.P. | 1232621 | [3.96] | 1428729 | [3.97] | 1823436 | [4.19] | 1433327 | [2.67] |
| Karnataka | 418453 | [2.15] | 487587 | [2.06] | 613026 | [02.09] | 764449 | [2.05] |
| Kerala | 2825720 | [20.85] | 3587365 | [21.22] | 4494089 | [21.05] | 5233865 | [20.56] |
| Tamilnadu | 1427382 | [4.73] | 1762954 | [5.22] | 2367749 | [5.74] | 2798048 | [5.78] |
| Pondicherry | — | — | 33946 | [9.19] | 41296 | [8.75] | 49914 | [8.25] |
| Lakshadweep | 2 | [0.01] | 56 | [0.23] | 239 | [0.75] | 266 | [0.66] |
| % of the region in the country | 5904178 | [70.34] | 7300637 | [68.08] | 9339835 | [65.67] | 10279869 | [60.00] |
| 2. West Zone | | | | | | | | |
| Goa, Daman & Diu | 233403 | [39.15] | 227202 | [36.25] | 272509 | [31.76] | 318249 | [29.28] |
| Gujarat | 78026 | [0.48] | 91028 | [0.44] | 109341 | [0.41] | 132703 | [0.38] |
| Maharashtra | 433290 | [1.35] | 560594 | [1.41] | 717174 | [1.42] | 795464 | [1.26] |
| Dadar & Nagar Haveli | 870 | [2.09] | 799 | [1.73] | 1918 | [2.58] | 2025 | [1.95] |
| % of the region in the country | 745589 | [8.88] | 879623 | [8.20] | 1100942 | [7.74] | 1248441 | [7.23] |

| Cultural Zones & States | 1951 | | 1961 | | 1971 | | 1981 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| 3. Eastern Region | | | | | | | | |
| Orissa | 141934 | [0.96] | 201017 | [1.14] | 378888 | [1.72] | 480426 | [1.82] |
| West Bengal | 181775 | [0.69] | 204530 | [0.58] | 252752 | [0.56] | 319670 | [0.58] |
| Andaman & Nicobar Is. | 9494 | [30.65] | 17973 | [28.28] | 30342 | [26.35] | 48274 | [25.57] |
| % of the region in the country | 333203 | [3.96] | 423520 | [3.95] | 661982 | [4.65] | 848370 | [4.92] |
| 4. Northern Region [Hindi Belt, Gangetic Plain] | | | | | | | | |
| a] Bihar | 415548 | [1.07] | 502195 | [1.08] | 658717 | [1.16] | 740186 | [1.05] |
| M.P. | 81004 | [0.31] | 188314 | [0.58] | 286072 | [0.68] | 354972 | [0.67] |
| Rajasthan | 11421 | [0.07] | 22864 | [0.11] | 30202 | [0.11] | 39568 | [0.11] |
| U.P. | 123876 | [0.19] | 101641 | [0.13] | 131810 | [0.14] | 162199 | [0.14] |
| % of the region in the country | 631849 | [7.52] | 815014 | [7.60] | 1106801 | [7.78] | 1296925 | [7.52] |
| b] Delhi [UT] | 18685 | [1.07] | 29269 | [1.10] | 43720 | [1.07] | 61609 | [0.99] |
| Chandigarh [U.T.] | 575 | [1.07] | 867 | [0.72] | 2504 | [0.97] | 4470 | [0.98] |
| Haryana | 4317 | [0.07] | 7378 | [0.09] | 9802 | [0.09] | 12215 | [0.09] |
| Himachal Pradesh | 2171 | [0.89] | 3274 | [0.11] | 3556 | [0.10] | 3954 | [0.09] |
| % of the region in the country | 25748 | [0.31] | 40788 | [0.38] | 59582 | [0.42] | 82248 | [0.47] |

| Cultural Zones & States | 1951 | | 1961 | | 1971 | | 1981 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| 5. Extreme North | | | | | | | | |
| Jammu & Kashmir | — | — | — | — | — | — | 7015 | [0.14] |
| Punjab | 9212 | [1.00] | 138907 | [1.24] | 162202 | [1.19] | 184934 | [1.12] |
| % of the region in the country | 9212 | [0.11] | 138907 | [1.30] | 162202 | [1.14] | 191949 | [3.12] |
| 6. North East | | | | | | | [1971 | Census] |
| Assam | 337953 | [4.10] | 493641 | [4.44] | 667151 | [4.46] | 667151 | [4.46] |
| Arunachal Pradesh | — | — | — | — | 364 | [0.74] | 27306 | [4.32] |
| Manipur | 63694 | [11.84] | 152043 | [19.49] | 279243 | [26.03] | 421702 | [29.67] |
| Meghalaya | 149378 | [22.66] | 270912 | [35.21] | 475267 | [46.97] | 702854 | [52.61] |
| Mizoram | — | — | — | — | — | — | 413818 | [83.81] |
| Nagaland | 98068 | [46.04] | 195588 | [52.97] | 344798 | [66.76] | 621590 | [80.21] |
| Sikkim | — | — | — | — | — | — | 7015 | [2.21] |
| Tripura | 5262 | [0.82] | 10039 | [0.87] | 15718 | [1.01] | 24872 | [1.21] |
| % of the region in the country | 654355 | [7.80] | 1122223 | [10.47] | 1782541 | [12.53] | 2886308 | [16.74] |
| Total India's Christians | 8393734 | [2.35] | 10723560 | [2.44] | 14223382 | [2.60] | 17246416 | [2.53] |
| Total India's Population | 357153382 | [100%] | 439451489 | [100%] | 547031272 | [100%] | 681643043 | [100%] |

II

# Paths of Mission in India Today: Our Common Search

CBCI Commission for Proclamation
and Communication: Working Group

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Background Paper

For an All-India Consultation at Ishvani Kendra, Pune Jan, 4-9, 1994 to celebrate the C.B.C.I's 50 anniversary (1944-1994), and 25 years after All India Consultation on Church in India Today [1969].

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This paper has been prepared as an introduction to the All-India Consultation on Paths of Mission in India Today. It consists of four parts:

I. The Actual Situation of India Today
II. Mission Realities of the Catholic Church in India
III. The Post-Vatican II Developments
IV. Orientation Towards the Future

## PART I: THE ACTUAL SITUATION OF INDIA TODAY

*Introduction*

1. We begin our search for the paths of mission from the present realities of our country, because the cares of our people are the cares of the Church. We start where people are, not where we are. "The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ." [GS No.1] We see lights and shadows,

strengths and weaknesses. We want to analyze our total life-situation as people of one nation with a rich and complex variety of peoples and religions, cultures and traditions, economic, political and social structures.

2. We believe that it is only by a "reading of the Signs of the Times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel" [GS. No. 4], that we can discern God's will for us. We trust that Christ's Spirit will lead us towards more faithful, relevant and dynamic forms of mission. The mission for which we have been anointed and sent is a mission of shedding light on the events and happenings in our motherland, and of meeting the needs and longings which we share with 890 million people of our country. We are convinced that together with our sisters and brothers of other faiths and ideologies we are to play an active part in the search and struggle to realise what the Constituent Assembly of India solemnly resolved in the Preamble of our Constitution:

   "We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic and secure to all its citizens: JUSTICE, social, economic and political; LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all: FRATERNITY, assuring dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation; in our Constituent Assembly this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution."

3. This search and struggle to bring about Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity is our involvement in God's plan. This plan is not a concern of Christians alone, but a mission common to all, for all of us form but one community; we have been created by the same loving God, share the same origin and are pilgrims to one and the same destiny: fullness of life in God [NA 1].
4. In discerning God's ways for ourselves, our nation and the world we are guided by the values of Christ's Gospel and the faith-experience of the universal Church. "For faith throws a new light on all things and makes known the full ideal which God has set for men and women, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human." [GS 11]
5. We undertake this search as members of the Church of Christ which is not merely a sociological phenomenon, but the community of the disciples of Jesus, vivified by his Spirit and called to make present in the world of today his healing power of reconciliation

and his compassionate love for every human person. Our task is, therefore, even in this first instance not simply one of social analysis: we are invited to enter into a prayerful process of discernment in the light of the teachings of Jesus Christ and Church's commitment to the realisation of God's reign in the world. We want to discover more clearly the ways in which we can become more responsive to the promptings of the Spirit, who urges us to work for a truly human future for all.

*Our Nation's Strengths and Weaknesses*

6. Since Independence India has moved with imagination and courage towards the ideals laid down in our Constitution; at the same time some of our limitations and weaknesses have painfully manifested themselves. This is the context in which we ask ourselves: What is the mission of the Church? How can our voice be as prophetic as that of our Master?
7. It is no mean feature that our democratic form of government has lasted for nearly fifty years. The almost incredible freedom of the press plays an important role in the conscientisation of our people, the defense and promotion of democracy and the performance of our government and its administration.
8. India has taken great strides in developing her industry. There is hardly a product that cannot be made in our country. Our scientists are second to no one. Some have left the country, but others have helped our industries develop products that are in demand all over the world. A scientific temper still has to emerge. Happy about India's participation in the world's economy, it is our prophetic mission to resist the hold of the multinationals on our economy, and their greed for fast profits. In view of the growing unemployment in our cities the expansion of our industries must become worker-centered.
9. A deep sense of the sacred and an integral and holistic approach to reality is the basic strength of our land and people. Religion and culture, the sacred and secular are seldom separated. An emphasis on harmony in relationship and communitarian approach to life and interaction are characteristic to Indian people. By birth and tradition we have a respect for nature, for Mother Earth who carries and feeds us, for the waters that quench our thirst, and for the sacredness of forests, rivers and mountains. Nature dictates the places and timings of prayer. All citizens need to be made

conscious of their responsibility for their environment, the preservation of planet earth as home for the generations to come, in short, for making the quality of life for everyone today and in the future the priority criterion of all activity. The future of all is endangered by the population explosion, by deforestation and the ruthless pursuit of fast economic results through ecologically irresponsible projects and industries which the richer nations shun.

10. In spite of the fundamentalist and communal organisations and movements and the painful outbursts of violence in the past and in the present, the strength of our subcontinent is its tolerance. Men and women of so many different origins, languages and religions have been living together in harmony and peace. We have allowed others to be different and we have been working together as a nation for the ideals laid down in our Constitution. Even in the recent outbursts of communal hatred and violence ordinary men and women showed heroic examples of the true Indian soul and ethos. We resist in word and deed all fundamentalist and communal tendencies. We believe in secularism as of equal respect and status to all religions. No one is discriminated on the basis of religion and caste.
11. We respect the human rights of all and find them firmly anchored in our Constitution. At the national and international level, our government and a good number of NGOs, do justice to our heritage of openness and tolerance by staunchly defending and promoting the fundamental human rights of every person and all persons. We are, however, aware that the rights of many are violated as the experiences of women's organizations, Dalit movements and Tribal Liberation associations sadly reveal.
12. India can be proud of its rich cultural variety. A recent anthropological survey has identified 5249 cultural communities within the country. Since religion and culture are intimately connected, the dominant communities are inclined to impose their tradition and religion as the only valid tradition and religion, and to suppress the "little traditions". There is an urgent need to foster the cultural and religious identity of every group, however small, and to show how each can contribute towards the richness of the country.

*Our People's Needs*

13. We now examine some of our country's more serious problems and

pressing needs. We do this not to blame particular individuals and groups, but to address ourselves — our country, our Churches. We want to identify and prioritize our problems and needs as mature citizens and Christians, find their root causes and listen to what the Spirit is saying to us and our Churches at this time in our context.

14. A large number of our people are poor. At the moment around 40% of our population, that is, around 350 million people live below or just on the poverty line. Practically majority of Scheduled Castes and Tribes belong to this category. Most of them are under nourished; without sufficient clothes and shelter; bonded to landlords and indebted to moneylenders; illiterate, unemployed or underemployed and unorganised. 30-35% of our people, that is, about 250-300 million people, form the lower middle class. They have to work hard to make both ends meet, but enjoy sufficient food, clothes and shelter, are educated and employed. Organized workers, small shopkeepers and farmers belong to this category. The neo-rich constitute about 15% of our country's population, that is, 150-200 million people. To this category belong the successful businessmen, large farmers and senior officers in government service. About 10% of our population, that is, approximately 90 million people are the very rich and can afford the best of everything without spending much of their energy.
15. While for the poor who can usually afford only cotton cloth, 26% less cloth was annually available during the period from 1980-1985 than in the period 1958-1965, but for the rich 200% more synthetic cloth was at their disposal. The textile industry sees far more profit in the production of synthetic cloth for the middle and upper classes than in making cotton cloth available to the poor.
16. So is shelter. However, the estimate is that the housing shortage which was 1 crore, 88 lakhs in 1988, will probably reach 3 crore, when we begin the next millennium. While the rich build well-equipped flats and bungalows with sprawling lawns, the poor have to live in one room tenenments, drainage pipes or on the pavements of the big cities. It is not difficult to imagine the sufferings and tensions in the families of the poor caused by the huge shortage of housing. The fact that over 60% of the funds allocated for urban and rural housing in the national Five Year Plans remained unused manifests the government's lethargy regarding the housing of the poor.

17. Health has become an industry that caters mainly to the well to do. The poor can hardly think of approaching a private doctor or visiting a private hospital. While 75% of Indians live in villages, only about 25-30% of medical facilities are found there. Only 40% of the Christian medical services are made available in the villages. Clean water and the minimum sanitation facilities, an absolute necessity for those who wish to stay healthy, are only to be found in the better localities of our cities. Many rural women walk miles to collect water, particularly during the summer.
18. In spite of numerous literacy campaigns and the training of thousands of teachers and development workers, the number of illiterate people has increased year after year. Free and compulsory education upto the age of 14, promised by the Indian Constitution, still remains unrealized for a large number of rural children. It is painful to see that successive Five Year Plans give less and less priority to primary schooling, but allocate more and more funds for university education. Thus, the first Five Year Plans gave 56% of the educational budget to primary education, but in the sixth Five Year Plan the budget for primary education had dropped to 36%, while the budget for university education has risen from 9% to 16%. Half of our people above the age of 5 are still illiterate.
19. The army of the unemployed and underemployed is steadily on the increase. Bonded labour ties numerous families to their oppressors and landlords and child labour deprives the young from their education and their youth. Government statistics estimate that the number of child-labourers lies between one crore and 45 lakhs and one crore and 75 lakhs.
20. In the past the poor often resigned to their poverty and its consequences; they considered it their fate, God's will, while the rich exploited this resignation for their own benefit. Such an interpretation is an abuse of our people's simple faith, as Pope John Paul II explained to the slum dwellers of Alagados (Brazil):

    > Do not say that it is God's will that you remain in a condition of poverty, disease, unhealthy housing, which is often contrary to your dignity as human persons. Do not say: "It is God who wills it."
    >
    > Faith tells us that it is not God's will that his sons and daughters should live a sub-human life. God's will is that every person should reach his/her full human stature as well as possible. Turn to him, a good and helpful Father [cf.Mt.6:25 and

7:11], to find in him, not an alibi for inertia and passivity, but courage to continue in your efforts. [L'Osservatore Romano, English Edition, 1980, nos.27-30].

*A Mobilising Vision*

21. The foundational experiences of our faith and that of our fellow citizens provided the members of the Constituent Assembly of our nation with the constitutive elements to boldly formulate and declare their vision for India in the preamble of our Constitution. Different ideologies, such as democratic socialism, liberal capitalism, marxism, have mobilised our fellow citizens to work for the realisation of this vision and to prepare the implement strategies to reach the ideals outlined in our Constitution.
22. We can distinguish various trends and currents which have influenced people and political parties. At this particular juncture in the history of our nation two currents urgently need our attention: religious fundamentalism and communalism.
23. Traits of religious fundamentalism is found among practically all religions today. It is a defense or coping mechanism, based upon the literal interpretion of particular sacred texts and/or revered traditions. Since a good number of people of different faiths — Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, etc. — find themselves confused in the modern complex, and highly competitive world, these fundamentalists display a clear religious identity by creating a sense of fanatical "we-feeling". They aggressively impose their narrow and conservative interpretation of religion on every area of life.
24. Communalism spreads through the defense and promotion of the best interests of a definite religious community which considers itself being threatened by a real or imagined enemy. It places itself over against other religions or so-called foreigners, which provokes tensions, mistrust and communal riots. It plays upon the fears of its devotees, appealing to its desire to defend its interests and to strengthen the group. Instead of unifying the nation and integrating the this communalism divides our motherland and tears it apart.
25. Two major power struggles are now threatening the unity of our country and the equality and freedom granted by the Indian Constitution. These are:
    i. The socio-economic conflicts between castes/sub-castes versus

Dalits/Tribals.

ii. The plan of Hindu communal forces to capture political power and impose their views and practices on the minorities.

26. It is our duty to realise the vision of our Constitution and to bring about justice, liberty, equality and unity which it visualized. Against this background and in this context we shall reflect on our missionary responsibilities and the concrete steps to be taken.

Questions

i. What is the prophetic mission of the Church in the concrete situation of today's India?

ii. Establish your priorities and substantiate your list of priorities for mission in the light of the values of the Gospel and the ideals of our Constitution.

## PART II: MISSION REALITIES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN INDIA

### *Regional or an All-India Approach*

27. In order to reflect upon the Church's mission in our country we must begin with the actual situation of our Catholic communities. During the past century we have become conscious of the All-India Church with its needs and common missionary responsibility. Still, India is a subcontinent with a great complexity of ethnic, cultural and social groups. Therefore, the Church too has very different features in various parts of the country. These differences are also connected with their historical origin, ethnic and cultural background of the people, their self sufficiency in economics and personnel.

28. We prefer, therefore, to describe one by one the four major Churches which make up the Church in India:

i. The Syrian Christian communities in Kerala of the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Rites;

ii. The Padroado Church originating in Goa and spreading all over the country, embodied in the Latin Rite dioceses;

iii. The Tribal Churches both in Central India and in the North East;

iv. The Dalit Churches with origins in the Padroado and Propaganda Fide periods.

29. We start with an outline of these Churches not to emphasize the differences in the Church in India but, on the contrary, to reflect on their prophetic role to be part of the Church in India and to make their specific contribution to its growth and mission. All share in the same mission to make the Kingdom of God, proclaimed by Jesus, an effective reality in our society and to fulfill this mission in their own specific way. Each Church has to develop and use its resources not only within its own setting, but also in view of the common mission of the Church in India. Each one has the right and duty to foster the new vision of the Church as "a communion of communities" [FABC, Bandung Statement, 1990, No.8].
30. While emphasizing both the differences of the Churches and their common prophetic mission, we are aware of the All-India dynamics already at work in various forms. We draw the readers' attention to the functioning of the CBCI, its secretariate and the contributions of various CBCI Commissions and Institutions. We think of the Conference of Religious of India [CRI], which is committed to a common vision of religious life and collaborates with the CBCI. The recruitment and training of missionary personnel and their appointments and transfers across the country create a network of important relationships. The visions and plans of religious congregations cut across narrow boundaries of States and Dioceses. However, we admit that by and large the contacts and interaction between dioceses and different ethnic groups must multiply and become stronger.

*The Syro-Malabar Church and its Mission Outside Kerala*

31. The oldest Church in India— the Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala — constituting nearly 62% of Kerala Catholics and one-fourth of India's Catholic population can be called the First Church. Before the Second Vatican Council there was little missionary thrust outside Kerala. Since the Council there has been a major missionary movement of the Oriental Churches to North India. The Syro-Malabar Church has eight dioceses and one Eparchy in the North. Many Syro-Malabar religious congregations of women have undertaken missionary work in outside Kerala. The number of missionaries going to oversea missions is on the increase.
32. Within Kerala itself there are some instances of conversion, that of Nadars in the Archdiocese of Trivandrum and Changanacherry.

Other features are family renewal movements, Basic Christian communities, youth movements, prayer meetings, charismatic movement, etc. The latter is a major feature in the present day life of the church. A large number of non-Christians are also said to be participating in charismatic prayer sessions and retreats. In some instances, it has contributed to conversions of individuals to the Church.

33. The reunion of the Syro-Malankara Church in 1932 was an historic movement. Though numerically small [about 6% of Kerala catholics] they embody the ancient oriental tradition in the country.

34. Nearly one-third of the Catholics belong to the Latin Rite and many among them belonged to the Oriental Church before their encounter with the Portuguese missionaries in the 16th century. With the Christian Spirit of reconcilian all these Churches are called to collaborate with the one mission of Christ in our country.

*The Padroado Mission*

35. The arrival of the Portuguese missionaries gave birth to the Second Church in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Their missionary activity was carried out under the Padroado system, the patronage of the colonial power. All along the western and eastern coast — Goa, Bassein, Coromandal and Malabar coast — these missionaries converted large numbers of people both from the upper castes, especially in Goa, and from the fisher-folk. 40% of Goa's population was converted, but the missionary endeavours, especially in the period between 1560 and 1652, were marked by the use of political force and other inducement for gaining converts. In 1951 36% of Goa's population was Catholic, but mainly due to migration and immigration this percentage had dropped to 30% in 1991.

36. The Portuguese origin has deeply influenced the character of the churches in Goa, Bombay, Mangalore and other areas, constituting nearly 10% of the Catholics. Through their missionaries (bishops, priests, religious sisters and brothers), it has left its mark on many dioceses in India. Many leaders of the Post-Vatican Church came from this Church. Gradually members of the First and Third Churches are sharing many All-India responsibilities. The number of vocations from the Second Church has steeply fallen during

the last decades, while vocations from the Third and Fourth Church are on the increase.

37. However, the missionary flame is still burning in the Second Church. The Society of Pilar is an indigenous missionary congregation that serves the needy Churches both in and outside the country. A number of diocesan priests from Goa have been sent to South America as missionaries. The diocese of Mangalore has adopted the Bidar mission in Hyderabad diocese, while the Archdiocese of Bombay has extended its missionary service to Punjab. In the light of these encouraging ventures more established dioceses in the South may be motivated to assist the young Churches in the North. Each bishop's and diocese's readiness to serve needy Churches is an expression that with all particularity we constitute the one Church in India and belong to one Universal Church.

*The Adivasi/Tribal Mission*

38. The Third Church in India is young and was born of missionary enterprises from the middle of the 19th century. It consists of the large Adivasi Church in Chotanagpur, the Tribal mission in the North-East and other small tribal Christian communities in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra and a few other pockets.

39. The Adivasi Church: A little more than a century ago when the missionary work was begun in the Chotanagpur Adivasi region, there were less than 50 Catholics. A mass conversion movement was set in motion by the Belgium Jesuit missionaries among the oppressed and exploited Adivasis of the region. Within a short period of seven years, about 70,000 adivasis became Christians. The mission work in Chotanagpur during the last one hundred years has resulted in a very vibrant and nearly self-sufficient Church in that area. The Catholics there account for 9% of the total Catholic population of India. Twelve Adivasi Bishops, the large number of priests and sisters of Adivasi origin are signs of a flourishing Church. In the years to come a large number of missionary vocations too — both to priesthood and religious life — will be from this Church.

40. The history of the mission in Chotanagpur bears witness to the transforming power of the Gospel, both in the life of the people and the social structure. Besides, the local traditions and cultures

were greatly preserved and there was less impact of westernization. However, the present emphasis on pastoral care mainly limited to the Christian faithful has affected the missionary movement which was more evident in the preindependence era. Many feel that proclamation does not appear to be a priority in the mission of this local Church. Instead building up the Church through pastoral activities becomes the all-absorbing feature.

41. The tribal Church of the North East: As a whole the people of the North East have welcomed Christianity in a big way. Today in three out of the seven states, Christians constitute the majority: Mizoram (83%), Nagaland (80%), Meghalaya (52%). 70% of the Christians in the N.E. are either Presbyterians or Baptists: Catholics account for one-fourth of the Christian population of the area, and 5.6% of India. The Catholic population which was less than 60,000 at the time of Independence has sharply increased to climb up to 7.1 lakh in 1990, thanks to the missionary zeal of the Salesians. The missionary movement is very much alive in the region. In Arunachal Pradesh around ten thousand people embrace Christianity every year inspite of official opposition and absence of resident missionaries. The dynamic leadership of the laity is very evident.

42. Most of the missionaries in the area still come from other parts of India. However, vocations to priesthood and religious life are gradually on the increase. In 1990 the region had its first indigenous Bishop. The missionaries — both Catholic and Protestant — are actively engaged in direct proclamation and in planting the Church in this area is considered to be the fact since the tribals find Christianity a religion that helps them to cope with the challenges of the modern world. They, therefore, are prepared to abandon their primal religion which is gradually disappearing here as well as elsewhere due to the challenges of modernization in every sphere of life.

*The Dalit Churches*

43. The first phase of the mass conversion to Christianity from the oppressed Scheduled Caste began in the 16th century when the Portuguese authorities and the missionaries extended protection to the oppressed Paravars of the Coromandal Coast in Tamilnadu and Mukkuvars of Kerala Coast. The work continued in Pondicherry and Tamilnadu in the following centuries among

different communities.

44. Mass conversion among those who were on the margin of the Indian society in South India, from the 16th century created new missionary problems. The rigid Caste factors were responsible for the creation of two types of missionaries with distinctive mission methods. Responding to the sensibilities of the caste Hindus, from the 17th century, ardent missionaries like De Nobili, De Britto, Beschi, Donnard and few other ventured into the new method of cultural adaptation in dress, food, place of prayer, and life style. They were successful, in a limited way, in reducing the social distance between the missionaries and unsympathetic Hindus and creating new Christian communities in Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh [Karnatic Mission]. Sad to record, due to the imprudence of the authorities, who, being far away from the local situation, doubted the goodwill and competence of these pioneers, the experiment was forced to discontinue. Positively, however, it laid the foundation for the new method of adaptation and inculturation both in theory and practice.
45. The second phase of the mass conversion from the Dalits began in the 19th century among the Malas and Madigas in Andhra Pradesh, Pulayas in Kerala, the Mahars and Mangs in Maharashtra, Bhalais in Madhya Pradesh, Dheds in Gujarat, the Churas in Punjab, the Chamars in U.P. and Bihar. They continue to suffer from the socio-economic discrimination imposed on them by the caste system without even the mitigation given to the other Dalits by the Constitution and subsequent legislation. The reason is that the Government officially regards them as no longer eligible for help on the ground that Christianity does not recognise distinctions based on caste. The efforts made by the Churches in the past to improve their situation by providing basic necessaries such as housing, land, education and employment, inadvertently created in many cases a state of dependency which further undermined their ability to stand on their own feet and assert their human dignity and fundamental rights.
46. Half of the Catholics in our country are Dalits who are discriminated both by the society and the Church. Certain confusion about their identity can be noticed as some assert their Dalitness while the majority hide it except for claiming government benefits. The number of the Dalit catholics is on the decline.
47. There has, however, been for some time an awakening among them, particularly in the south, which offers them a real challenge

to the Churches sent "to proclaim the Good News to the poor — liberty to the captives — to set free the oppressed." [Lk.4:18-9] Can we consider this mobilisation of Christian Dalits in solidarity with other Dalits, asserting their rights and cultural heritage, an exercise of their prophetic role in Church and society?

48. A very uneven distribution of Catholics as well as missionaries all over India is a major feature of the Church in India. Their highest concentration is in the four southern States with 68.6% Catholics, 60% priests, 70% sisters and 56% lay brothers. In contrast, their meagre presence in the Hindi belt is striking: 15% Catholics, 22% priests, 19% sisters and 30% brothers. Those in authority [bishops, provincials, superiors] who are responsible for the recruitment, formation, distribution and planning of missionary personnel should make serious and systematic efforts to overcome this glaring imbalance.

Questions

i. What are the main issues on evangelization that urgently need attention respectively in the First, Second, Third and Fourth Churches?

ii. How can we, respecting the particular responsibility of each Local Church for itself, strengthen mutual inspiration, collaboration and encouragement and work together for the welfare of the nation?

iii. How can we contribute to the Universal Church with out very special experience of religious pluralism and a unique spiritual heritage?

## PART III: THE POST VATICAN II SCENARIO DEVELOPMENTS

### *Our Response to the Post-Vatican II Scenario*

49. *Positive Aspects*: In the wake of and in creative response to the Vatican II call to renewal, the Church in India initiated a process of rethinking and revitalizing its mission, the era of the Church's new openness and relationship to the world ushered in by the Council was initially welcomed with eager expectation and enthusiasm. We have since then been engaged in a search, a discernment of the ways or paths of mission in the historical context

of our life. There is a growing conviction that the context determines the paths of mission. This search is a sign of the growing maturity of the Church and its determination to become a truly local Church.

50. One can trace the growth process in contextualisation of mission in the very first All India ecclesial event after the Council, namely, the Church in India Seminar of 1969. Many have ventured into new forms of being on mission. Participation in the struggles of the people for full human dignity, and involvement in actions for justice have been found to be valid forms of mission. The involvement of the laity in such ventures is a sign of the vitality of the Church's mission. Others have made dialogue, especially the promotion of the dialogue of life and building up basic human communities a priority in mission in this land of living religions.

51. Building up truly local Churches fully inserted in the local cultures of India — Churches authentically Indian and truly Christian — is also a major concern in the mission agenda and praxis of the Church as a whole. In short, the Indian Church has taken new steps in evangelization. The remarkable initiatives taken in the above fields and the creative forms of mission that are being under taken testify to the continuing search for paths of mission.

52. *Negative Aspects*: However, there is much confusion. A certain polarisation takes place concerning the theological foundations of our mission and, consequently, new pastoral approaches. Some cling to the past when the Church was seen the only possibility of salvation and remain with strategies in keeping with this thinking. They also point at the lack of visible results in numbers of conversions as a result of new theories. Connected with it is also the understanding of mission in terms of institutions and numbers of the faithful. Effective institutional presence as basis for evangelisation is still something rated very high in their mission agenda. Often they also accuse missionaries who seek for new paths of mission as renouncing the true mission of the Church and taking a compromising stand with regards the uniqueness of Christ and Church. Sometimes this attitude is connected with a fundamentalist theology and aggressive pastoral approaches. On the other side, it is true that a number of missionaries have lost the sense of the urgency of mission in an attitude of apathy and indifference partly due to the prevailing unsettled situation of insecurity.

53. Still, the lack of zeal cannot be put exclusively at the door of an

unsettled theology. It may be traced back, at times, to faulty recruitment and deficiencies in formation resulting in the lack of deep personal convictions and firm commitments in some priests, unable to resist the temptations of a consumer - and comfort dominated culture which is accessible to them through the higher social standing of the priest-hood. Many priests want to go to rich countries or, at least, have good bank balance. The lack of a truly committed love to Jesus Christ is more dangerous to the missionary spirit than theological problems.

54. The unsettled theological, spiritual and pastoral situation in which we find ourselves has affected the on going search for new paths of mission so crucial for the future of the Church in our country. In the search for new paths we have to face the basic issue of Christian faith and life. Our mission in India must embody both the reality of the Indian context to which the mission is addressed and the reality of the Church which is called to proclaim the Good News in fidelity to Jesus Christ. The Church is confronted by two features which profoundly affect it at every level, viz. the plurality of religions and the unjust social situation of massive poverty and dehumanization.

*The Plurality of Religions*

a) *The Stand of the Magisterium*

55. Vatican II is a turning point in the Church's relation to other religions. The understanding of mission in Vatican II has developed around two focal points — the need for evangelization and the growing appreciation of religions; however, the inter-relationship between these two nuclei is still in the process of being elaborated.

56. From a generally negative attitude to other religions, the Church now affirms that God's saving designs extend to all people [NA 1], and that all religions are related to the People of God [LG 16-21]. Consequently the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions [NA 2]. Nevertheless the perennial validity of the missionary mandate of the Church to proclaim Christ is strongly reiterated without spelling out the implications of the relationship between evangelization and respect for other religions.

57. Subsequently the implications of both evangelization (see: *Evangelli Nuntiandi*) and dialogue (see: *Dialogue and Proclamation*) are

elaborated. But the crucial issue of the relationship between evangelization and dialogue is left open: "This consideration gives rise to very many complex questions which call for great prudence. Theologians have still to study these important questions in the light of Christian tradition and the Magisterium, so that new paths may be opened" [EN 53]. Any solution which seeks to dilate the unique mediation of Christ or proclaim a Kingdom which is not inclusive of Christ is discounted (*Redemptoris Missio* 17).

b] *The Documents of the Asian Church*

58. The perspective of the FABC documents has always been the vision of a new world being born in Asia. The thrust of the statements has been missionary dialogue, incarnating the Gospel in the context of the realities of Asia, its histories, religions, cultures, traditions and above all, the poor masses.

In the new Asian context mission is carried out through the triple Dialogue: (a) dialogue with the great religious traditions of the people of Asia; (b) dialogue with the poor, the deprived and the oppressed; (c) dialogue with living traditions, the cultures and with the life realities of the people in whose midst we serve [FABC, Taipei, 1974, No.9-24].

c] *The Stand of the Indian Church*

59. Our stand as the Church in India has involved different emphases: a change in approach towards religions leading to a quest for theological articulation, (see: *All-India Seminar — Church in India Today, Bangalore* (1969) pp.243-244), and a need for dialogue both of mutual respect and appreciation and of life (see, *The International Theological Conference on Evangelization and Dialogue,* Nagpur, 1971, Nos.23-29).

*Question*: How can we Indian Christians live out and theologically articulate our mission in loyalty both to our commitment to Christ and our respect for our brothers and sisters of other faiths? What is the deeper inter-relationship between proclamation and dialogue?

d] *Issues Confronting us in this Sector*

60. [i] *The Approach*: Pluralism and multiplicity in their various forms have always characterized our Indian scenario. This dimension is an existential and perennial challenge to us, Indian Christians. While in the past, Christian existence in the multi-religious context of India has been generally characterized by exclusion and isolation, it is practically impossible for us to be contemporary Christians without taking into account the questions asked of us and the claims made by the members of other faiths with whom we live and share a common destiny. This calls for a new vision, a turning away from exclusive introversion to a courageous open perception and recognition of others as others.

61. [ii] *The Theological Articulation of our Faith*: Our theological language is necessarily influenced by the past tradition and inheritance. But we should ascertain that our expressions do not offend the self understanding and self respect of others. Our language must be theologically clear but also respectful for people of other faiths. It must be revised. Perhaps when dialogue will have progressed further, a language will emerge when all of us, members of different religious traditions, will be able to recognize our own identity.

62. Our Christian faith is centred on the person of Jesus Christ: Through him we are children of God, brothers and sisters of our human family. As Christians we also are convinced of the universal significance of his person and mission. It will be part of our theological reflection that this faith in Jesus Christ does not separate us from followers of other religions but links us to them in a new way. Through him we come to a deeper understanding of their vision of God and world, and, at the same time, they will help us to come to deeper insights in the mystery of Jesus' person and mission.

63. [iii] *Dialogue*: Jesus Christ, emptying Himself on the cross in an unconditional surrender to the Father gives us the courage for dialogue. Keeping our hearts fixed on the Christ event, and at the same time opening our minds to the vast and ineffable mystery of God present in the faith-experiences of our sisters and brothers of other faiths, our Christian approach becomes one of hopeful listening to the other and of humble sharing of ourselves. In this process we are transformed: we enter into the profound mysteries of our faith; we make this holy pilgrimage along with our

brothers and sisters of other faiths. This calls for inter-religious dialogue on the level of life, theological reflection and sharing religious experience and dialogue of action [D.P. 1991, No.42].

64. Dialogue is both a mode of being and way of life. It is a sharing and a process of mutual enrichment; it is a paradox of rootedness and openness; commitment to one's ideals and open appreciation and acceptance of others. It implies limitations and perfections, pain and joy; it is a process of listening to and discovering the other, in whom the Spirit has also worked wonders.

*The Question of Liberation and Humanization*

65.[a] *The Council and the Synod*: Vatican II affirms the equality of all human beings in the face of widespread injustice present in the world and makes an impassioned plea for social justice [GS 29,66]. Subsequently salvation while not being identified with human development is linked with it [EN 32-36]; so much so the Synod of the Bishops affirmed: "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appears to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, that is, of the mission of the Church for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation" (Synod of Bishops, *On Justice in the World*, 1971, No.6).

b] *The Stand Taken by the Church in India*

66. The Indian Church echoes Vatican II and calls for radical social change which will afford justice for the poor and underprivileged. This requires that the existing social order be radically reformed so that the fruits of development may be equally shared (see: *The All-India Seminar — Church in India Today*, Bangalore, 1969, pp.244-245). This development must be integral and human (see: *The International Theological Conference on Evangelization and Dialogue*, Nagpur, 1971 Nos. 30-37) and calls for a prophetic Church able to identify with the poor (see: *All-India Consultation on Evangelization*, Patna, 1973, p.370-372).
The General Body Meeting of the CBCI (Pune 1992) dealt with the specific issues of Dalits, Women and Unorganised Labour.

[c] *Issues Confronting us in this Sector*

67. In our country where structural socio-political inequality, injustice and oppression are rampant, liberation cannot be given a purely spiritual connotation, but necessarily has socio-economic implications. We are constantly confronted with situations of injustice where large numbers of people live in abject misery. But is the mission of the Church realised primarily in alleviating poverty and healing the wounds inflicted, or is a mission to be envisaged in a more radical manner as working and collaborating towards the elimination of those structures and processes which are causative of this poverty and injustice?

[i] *The Dalits*

68. The worst form of social discrimination is the practice of untouchability based on the caste-system. However, in an unprecedented way the Dalits, have been awakened and begun to demand their rights. In many instances, this process is marked by tension, resistance and violence. The demands and reactions of these groups are often countered by manipulation, fraud and related crimes unleashed on them.

[ii] *The Tribals*

69. Tribal groups that prior to Independence enjoyed a sheltered existence and a high degree of autonomy and security, have begun to resist with increasing violence, the new situations in which they find themselves since Independence. They feel that their freedom has been considerably curtailed and undue demands made on them to share their natural resources. In their attempt to acquire for themselves these resources, the intruding groups have not only come to exploit them in various ways, but are threatening their traditional identity, the fabric of their social structure and their way of life, even to depriving them of some of their fundamental rights.

[iii] *Women*

70. Indian religions in general have sanctioned the subordinate position of women in society. Caste has further legitimised and controlled

their unequal status. From their childhood, women are socialized in such a way to prepare them to become wives and mothers. Women's labour, women's sexuality and women's fertility have been subjected to widespread exploitation. The advent of a competitive and profit-oriented economy has resulted in a further deterioration of the status of the women. Not only have traditional forms of oppression, such as female infanticide, the denial of education and dowry deaths increased, but fresh forms of oppression such as the abortion of the female foetus and the exploitation of women by the commercial media have become common. Even in the Church, women are denied equality in every sphere and their empowering leaves much to be desired.

71. There is a growing concern among lay and religious women that the structure of injustice and oppression in society and Church prevent their full development and liberation. This has begun to express itself in committed actions for empowering changes.

[d] *Problems Connected with Liberation and Mission*

72. If the Church's mission implies not only works of charity and projects to alleviate the poverty of the people but also efforts to transform social structures and processes that give rise to the unjust conditions of our society we have to deepen and widen the contents of genuine Christian education. Many traditional Christians are used to identify Christian life with purely religious symbols: Prayer, preaching, worship. Pope Paul VI has opened the horizon and in his Encyclical "Evangelii Nuntiandi" firmly stated: In the preceding synod on Evangelization "especially bishops from the Third World, spoke with a pastoral accent resonant with the voice of millions of sons and daughters of the Church who make up these peoples, ...peoples engaged with all their energy in the effort and struggle to overcome everything which condemns them to remain on the margin of life: Famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices in international relations... The Church, as the bishops repeated, has the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, many of whom are her children, the duty of assisting the birth of this liberation, of giving witness to it, and ensuring that it is complete, this is not foreign to liberation" [EN.30].

73. This task of extending the Christian vision to the secular, social sphere and the urgent need of its reform is made even more

difficult by the ambiguous role religion has played in the life of the people: Religious texts often have been utilized to legitimize social inequalities and discriminations: Hindu Scriptures give religious sanction to the caste system; the Bible is quoted for the subordination of women in the social sphere. A fuller understanding of our Christian faith and its impact on all spheres of life and society is needed if our Christian message is meant to be relevant for modern India.

74. One more aspect of the commitment to social change will create problems: It implies struggle. This conflict sometimes takes on violent expression. The conflict can be within the Christian community itself as is the case with the Dalit Christian movements in the South, or it can be with oppressive forces irrespective of religions. This results in divisions and polarisations within and outside the Christian community. Deep bonds other than those based on religion are established and solidarity with other groupings strengthened. This gives the impression of jeopardizing the common witnessing and united action. Unity based upon the commitment to the Kingdom and its values can set in motion new alignments and lead to the emergence of new communities which the ecclesiology in practice in the Church in India may be ill equipped to cope with.

*Inculturation of the Local Church; Evangelization of Cultures*

75. The building of a truly local Church has become an urgent and primary task in our mission agenda. The Church in India has to die to become fully incarnate in the life of the people, seeking communion with all, renouncing all traits of foreigness and isolation and shedding the past identity which was an "identity-through-separation". There is a growing conviction that only when the mystery of the Church is incarnate in the cultures of India will she become an authentic sign and realisation of the Good News of Jesus Christ the Word incarnate. In this process the Church has to follow no other norm than the pattern of incarnation. The Church must seek to share whatever is genuinely human among its people, even assume the weaknesses and failings present in a culture in order to heal and enable it, following the sound principle that nothing is redeemed unless it is first assumed. It is clear that inculturation of the Church does not mean adopting archaic forms of cultural expressions of a domi-

nant culture. On the contrary, a greater urgency is felt in inculturating the Church in the "little traditions" of the marginalized sections of our society.

76. Further, inculturation should be a liberating experience for the people. It should be considered simultaneous with evangelization. We cannot afford to hold on to a mission policy of first proclamation and then inculturation; the proclamation and the formation and building up of Christian community must be characterised from the beginning with the incarnational dimension. Evangelization and inculturation have to go hand in hand.

77. In searching paths of mission, inculturation should not be understood merely as an optional endeavour, but as essential to her mission.The radical questioning of the foreigness of our identity should not be left to those who oppose Christianity. It must begin with the missionary Church itself; can we have an evangelization without inculturation? Is inculturation a strategy or has it a place in the very heart of the evangelizing ministry of the Church?

*Integrity of Creation*

78. The Church's mission to transform the world by the values of the Gospel should be in tune with the all-pervading spirit, the spirit of reverence for nature embedded in the culture, spirituality and life-style of India. Indian religious traditions have long proclaimed the sacredness of nature. They proclaim and promote a cosmic spirituality of harmony with the nature. In this context the Church itself should manifest a deep reverence for Mother Earth and courageously expose the fallacy of those who, for selfish ends, exploit nature at the expense of the harmony of the cosmos, and detriment of others. To allow the greed of some to plunder nature causing a serious threat to the very survival and balance of the eco-sphere and of the human race itself is to abandon our responsibility for nature and humanity. It is part of the evangelizing mission of the Church to promote a greater sense of harmony and balance, a spirit of partnership with nature, an attitude of stewardship and to denounce the mentality of profit-orient domination and exploitation of the earth that surrounds (environment) our life. To develop and promote a holistic attitude characteristic of our Indian ethos spirituality of communion with nature and to invite our people to live such a spirituality of communion and to announce God's plan of harmony, appears an

urgent task in the mission agenda of the Church in India. Preserving and promoting the integrity of creation is part of the Church's mission of living the faith that does justice.

79. Related to this is the larger issue of advocating a sound development which essentially includes a commitment to the ecological balance. A theology, practice and life-style based on the conviction that the earth is our common heritage, that its fruits are for the benefit of all, that individual and collective greed should not be allowed to pose a threat to the very survival of the human family and ecological balance. The unjust patterns of consumption and their wasteful life-style must be opposed and stopped in order to do justice to all on earth.

*The Local Church as the Responsible Subject of Mission*

80. Evangelization is the collective responsibility of the entire Church — the whole community of believers. This community is essentially missionary. Greater involvement of all the members of the community of faith in the mission of the Church is an essential feature of a mature Church. Awakening the laity to the mission of the Church, therefore, becomes an urgent task in the years ahead. Conditions conducive to the full flowering of the charisms of the laity for fulfilling their mission need to be created. To keep repeating that the role of the laity in the transformation of the world without giving due importance to their charisms both within and outside the Church is tantamount to continuing the status quo of a clerical Church. Without the promoting of creative lay ministries in the mission of the Church we will not make evident that the entire Church is the subject of mission. This is best realised in basic or small Christian communities.

81. Only when we have small Christian communities conscious of the gifts of the spirit effectively organized for the service of the people will we be able to give expression of the vision of the Church as a communion of communities of faith and witness.

82. In the Church today there are many forms of consecrated life, by the profession of evangelical counsels. "The religious state bears witness to the eschatological character of the Church" [CI.55]. History witnesses to the outstanding service rendered by religious societies in the spread of the faith and the formation of the new Churches. "The Church needs to make known the great Gospel values... No one witnesses more effectively to those values than

those who profess the consecrated life in chastity, poverty and obedience, in the total gift of the self to God and in the complete readiness to serve man and society after the example of Christ" [RM.69].

*Areas of Search*

83. Along with these main issues of the mission scene in India and connected with them, some particular areas of search and tension must be mentioned without analysing them in detail. They point at the complexity of our Indian situation.

a] *The Institutional Life of the Church*

- ❒ We observe a steep increase in the institutional development of the Church — pastoral, educational, medical, social. It reveals vitality, but threatens to reduce the personal growth and involvement of the people and to turn the Christian community too much into an organization.
- ❒ Simultaneously we are glad to see the development of many non-institutional ministries which reveal the creative initiatives of Christians, both laity and religious.
- ❒ Connected with the increase of institutions is the continued predominance of the clerical character of the Church. The participation of the laity in its life and decision-making is slow. The spiritual and theological formation of the laity is inadequate. Their sense of responsibility for the life and mission of the Church is weakened.
- ❒ In particular, women, laity and religious, have not been given an adequate place in the life of the communities. Their apostolic and missionary potential is not sufficiently developed and activated.
- ❒ The co-existence and collaboration of the three rites in the Indian Church remains difficult. Persistent tensions and mutual seclusion disturb the image of the one Church and lead to isolation and rivalry. The three rites in India (as all rites in the Catholic Church) have a twofold meaning: to express the richness of the divine mystery revealed in Jesus Christ and living in the Church and the unity in faith, witness and work of all Christians for a renewed India.

b] *The Ethnic and Linquistic Pluralism*

84. ❒ The inculturation of Christian life in India has been slow. It has been more successful where it takes place in the local context of ethnic and linguistic groups.
❒ The presence of a great number of priests and religious coming from the South is an immense help for the development of Christian life in the northern regions. Tensions can hardly be avoided; they are mitigated where the goal of all mission is clearly kept in mind: the development of the local Church.

c] *The Church's Opening to the Secular Realities*

85. ❒ The inclusion of the secular realities in the scope of the Church's mission in Vatican II has led to a wide involvement in social and development activities for the good of the people. It led, however, also to tensions and conflicts at different levels.
❒ Some regions are slow in responding to the call to social responsibility, out of fear to the risks involved.
❒ Others tend to the extreme of considering social involvement the primary goal of the Church's mission and developing it at the expense of the spiritual core and the comprehensive scope of the Christian message.

d] *Theological and Liturgical Polarization*

86. The opening of new theological perspectives in the Council and the controversies connected with it has not only disturbed the unity in the Church in India but also led to a certain alienation from Rome. Many feel that Roman authorities are not sufficiently aware of actual situation and problems in India. Openness to better communication and readiness for mutual dialogue seem very desirable.
87. The polarisation of liturgical trends and practices especially in the Syro-Malabar Rite is disturbing the faithful. Liturgical laws must be clear and at the same time give some scope for the creative expression of celebrant and faithful. As they are meant for the community of the faithful they ought to satisfy the actual needs of the people in our changing times. Liturgy must remain for ever a bond of unity.

*Questions*: Against the background of the multifacated picture of the Church in India and the different, often conflicting trends we may ask these questions:

1] In a constructive approach we ask: What in these trends is healthy, perhaps vital, for our missionary orientation? What is dangerous?
2] What must be our real goals [a] In the formation of priests and religious (initial and ongoing) to fulfill their pastoral and missionary task? [b] In the Christian education of the laity, youth and adult?

## PART IV: ORIENTATION TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Against the background of the actual situation of the Church in India, and of the often conflicting trends in thinking and actual work in our mission we try to articulate the orientation we need in fulfilling our common responsibility.

### a] *The True Christian Identity*

88. We are aware of the basic need of the Church in India — the Church all over the world — to deepen the sense of our Christian identity, as of *our faith in Jesus Christ*. Mission is a test of faith. We do have a communal identity as a body of Christians among people of other religions. We also are supported by the institutional identity of the organised Church: dioceses, parishes, educational institutions, etc. But are we sufficiently alive to the depth and richness of our faith in Jesus Christ? We belong to a *nation of rich spiritual traditions;* they are still alive in spite of secularization and political misuse of religion. Our ancestors knew of a knowledge of God which raised them above the contingencies of life: to know the Atman means to know everything — all other knowledge touches only the surface of things; the knower of Atman is free from fear. In the very first encounter of a Pope with our country Paul VI addressed representatives of the various religions of India: "Yours is a land of ancient culture, the cradle of great religions, the home of a nation that has sought God with a relentless desire, in deep meditation and silence and in hymns of fervent prayer. Rarely has the longing for God been expressed with words so full of the spirit of Advent as in the words written

in your Sacred books many centuries before Christ: from the unreal lead me to the Real, from darkness to the Light, from death lead me to Immorality" (ND 1031).

89. If we expect that the Christian message find an echo in the heart of India we must first be filled with the depth of our faith, of the unspeakable *mystery of God* given to us in Jesus Christ. In him God has also shown us the *meaning of our human existence*, the unique dignity of human life, rich and poor; but also our brokenness in sin and suffering and the healing power leading us to the fullness of life and to true communion in mutual respect and solidarity. We cannot have relevant relations to our neighbours and a mission for the world in which we live without a true spiritual identity as believers in Jesus Christ. Apart from our life in Jesus Christ we have nothing to contribute to building up our nation; our work will remain on the surface. The danger has become acute in our Church which is over institutional, activist and result-oriented. People *search for the living God*. The ancient vision of Zechariah comes true also today; "ten men of the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew saying: Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech 8,23).

*The Christian Witness*

90. Ever since Vatican II the *language of life*, the Christian witness, has been given the first place in the communication of the Christian message (AG 11 & 12). It can speak also where no actual proclamation is possible. It is even more necessary where the Church is institutionally present and the Gospel is preached because the Christian faith is not an ideology, a doctrinal system with ethical norms, but a way of life, personal and in community. In and through living Christian communities the richness and power of the Christian message become tangible and attractive.

91. Therefore the missionary orientation of the Church must first take care of the *image of the Christian community*, both of the official Church of bishops, priests and religious, and of the community of the believers. "Image", of course, does not stand for facade, for covering up failures, but for the genuine manifestation of a Christian life.

92. Undoubtedly the Catholic Church, its authorities and institutions, enjoy a *high degree of esteem* in our country for their efficient

service. Still we cannot be deaf to the frequent *negative comments* on life style, on attitudes and politics in the Church, on lacking integration into the lifestream of the nation. As the Church is Christ's body, his effective presence in our world and society, we ought to be sensitive to the ever repeated criticism, the apparent contrast between Jesus' person and the Christian Church.

93. In the *universal Church* the growing trend of centralized control and of the use of repressive measures has become a source of resentment in the Catholic Church and also an obstacle to ecumenism. Also on the *local level* the continued *clerical domination* in community life is a seriously disturbing feature. It must be overcome by appropriate pastoral measures and by the formation of seminarians in line with the orientations of Vatican II. It seems that other churches also young Christian communities, are more advanced in the involvement of the laity in the life of the community and also in decision-making processes. Particularly *women* must be recognized for their irreplaceable contribution to the life of the Church and be given the rightful place in the Church's apostolate, mission and participation in decision making.

94. The *equal dignity* of all people before God, and therefore in the community of Jesus' disciples, belongs to the core of the message of God's reign. Through the centuries the Church has struggled, and often failed, in realizing true brotherhood/sisterhood in the practice of Christian life. It is a disturbing slur in the Indian Church that *caste-differences* and rivalries still go on, and at times even increase. In a special way the discrimination against *Dalits* in various regions and the deep rifts resulting from it in Christian communities must be overcome lest our message lose credibility.

*The Language of Proclamation*

95. In the fulfillment of our mission the appropriate articulation of our faith is of vital importance. The need of traditional language is obvious: our faith is embodied in the Christian community; its identity and continuity must be realized also in its verbal expression. Still, language is the medium of personal communication. It is not an anonymous tape that transmits information but reveals the mind of the speaker and must find an echo in the mind of those who hear. It was Pope John's XXIII ardent desire that the Council should not be confined to doctrinal correctness but find a meaningful and inspiring expression of our faith in the world

of today: "The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing and the way in which it is presented is another. It is the latter which must be taken into great consideration" (Introductory speech to the Council, S.Abbot p.715). This desire must be fulfilled in every country in ever new ways. The search for such language may be difficult, even dangerous, but it is absolutely necessary. There is a difference in the *language concerned with orthodoxy* and that meant *for proclamation.* Have we books which we may confidently lay into the hands of a modern enquirer who wants to know our message and faith presented in a way that makes sense for our world of today in an Indian context? In India where people have high esteem and reverence for Jesus Christ the language of proclamation often becomes an obstacle to effective mission work.

96. In sharing the Good News we also must follow the *divine pedagogy* as we find it in the entire history of salvation and in particular in the mission of Jesus. God speaks "in deeds and words" (DV 2). These are not two parallel channels, rather God reveals himself in the works of creation and salvation which must be interpreted and so lead in faith. He never begins with doctrinal statements, but words are meant "to proclaim the works and bring in light the mystery they contain" (ibid).

97. Also, in our modern situation the proclamation of our faith must *never begin with dogmas.* They are the final result of a process, the growing understanding of the mystery of Jesus Christ. Jesus came from the silence of Nazareth and his mission unfolds during his ministry as a rabbi, leading to his death. Slowly the disciples began to see. The breakthrough came through the encounter with the Risen Lord, and only the last Gospel contains the final and full adoring recognition: "My Lord and my God." This process is guided by the Holy Spirit, it cannot be cut short. Today people must *meet Jesus* in the *Bible* accounts and most of all in *the living Christian community.* Only in this encounter faith can grow. Faith can never be taught, it can only be shared and awakened by the Holy Spirit. Our mission cannot consist in "making Christians" but in helping people in their encounter with Jesus Christ. In our search for paths of mission we must ask how we can help people in our country in this encounter.

*Proclamation and Dialogue*

98. The lack of clarity in the relation between Proclamation and dialogue has been pointed out before The Encyclical "Redemptoris Missio" sees dialogue as "part of the Church's evangelizing mission," not in opposition to, but with "special links to the mission Ad Gentes." There is "no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in inter-religious dialogue," yet the two must "maintain their distinctiveness" and "should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical as though they were interchangeable" [RM55].

99. Proclamation is the communication of the Good News to people with the explicit intention of inviting them to the acceptance of the Faith in Jesus Christ and to become members of the visible Church. Baptism is a sign and seal of our common discipleship, expressing intimate communion with Christ and the Church. It is a sacrament of one's public committment to live according to the values of the Gospel and work for the realization of the kingdom of God.

100. Dialogue comprises "all positive and constructive inter-religious and relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment" [DM 3]. Thus it is not a non-commital conversation on religious matters but an effort to promote unity and collaboration for the betterment of human society. It is necessary in all spheres of modern life: "Growing interdependence in all sectors of society necessary for living together, for human promotion and above all for purchasing the demands of peace render a dialogish style of human relations today ever more urgent" [DM21]. For the Christian dialogue is also an expression of his faith "to discover and bring to light and fullness the richness which the Father has hidden in creation and history....to promote among all mankind the movement of the gift of the Father" [DM22]. Thus a Christian will always give witness to his faith in his dialogue, and "normally nourish in his heart the desire of sharing the experience of Christ with his brother of another religion" [DM 40].

101. Dialogue and mission are inseparable in the Church's mission today. The concrete form of carrying out this mission, however, will depend on the cultural and social conditions so different in various regions of our sub-continent. The Church has to fulfill her mission in different ways in a tribal area, in the urban setting of

the big cities or on a university campus.

102. We must be conscious of the *political and communal climate* by which we are surrounded: the widespread suspicion of all Church activities, religious or social, as being attempts of proselytizing. We ought not to be frightened by the watchful eyes that observe our moves but we must be aware of the blocks which are created in the minds of the people against the Christian message. Often it will be difficult to give clear norms: e.g. a Christian in an office is known and recognised for his/her honesty, reliability, spirit of solidarity and helpfulness; he/she is known and respected as a Christian. Should she besides this Christian witness, engage in "proclamation" and even perhaps antagonize companions and management? Neighbourhood apostolate is most important among Hindus and Muslims: It will consist in respect, concern, help, sharing in joys and sorrows, in the "Christian presence". Christians who are filled with the richness of their faith will find the opportunity to share something of the strength and peace of Jesus with others without becoming obtrusive. Where is here the line between confession of faith, witness, proclamation and dialogue?

103. Thus it seems that the formation of our communities for greater involvement in the Church's mission will primarily consist in deepening their own faith. In renewing the community relations within parishes and institutions, awaken the conscience that Jesus' spirit of love and service is our contribution not only for the individual life of the people but for society, for the life of the nation. Many feel with Pope John Paul II (Redemptoris Missio) an anxiety about the slackening zeal in proclaiming Jesus Christ more effectively in our modern society. This concern, however should not lead to a grave mistake of laying the emphasis of mission primarily on organized campaigns (e.g. door to door visits, as the sects do). The Christian community itself must become the effective proclamation of Jesus' saving love. It must be experienced in our communities that we "are called out of darkness into God's wonderful light" [1 Pet 2,9]. The future of the Church's mission depends on the Christian laity, the men and women who belong to our secular society and have their share in the work and struggle of our nation. The Gospel is written in their hearts and revealed in their lives; it is not a system of norms and values but Jesus Christ living in them and giving meaning and orientation to all activities. The Council emphasized the mis-

sionary character of the community: It is not enough to give a good example. Christian people "are organized and present for the purpose of announcing Christ to their non-Christian fellow citizens by word and deed and of aiding them towards the full reception of Christ" [AG 15]

104. The need of living proclamation holds good also for our *institutions,* educational, medical, social. They have increased fast over the past decades and absorb much of our personnel, priests and religious. It is not enough that they are registered as Christian; we must reflect seriously about the distinctive features of a "Christian institution." It must first be governed by values of the Gospel, not by ambition for power, money, social status, and efficiency; it must breathe a "Christian atmosphere" of honesty, justice, respect for persons, and humble service without sacrificing hard work and efficiency.

105. The missionary must be a contemplative in action. Unless the missionary is a contemplative he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way [RM. 91]. The Indian religious tradition is profoundly characterized by a sense of silence, interiority, asceticism, and prayer. To foster this contemplative awareness in the Indian Church, the religious communities could be renewed with the spirit of Ashram life. Ashram life has a special place in the mission of Church in India.

*Secular Involvement*

106. In Vatican II the Church has opened herself to the world, to the secular realities. In earlier periods of her history she had controlled many spheres of culture and social life. The emancipation of all these spheres from tutelage through the Church was a painful experience. In the Council, however, *the Church courageously renounced control,* recognized the relative autonomy of culture and science. She did so not to withdraw into a purely spiritual sanctuary, but in a new way felt "intimately linked with mankind and its history." She showed her "respect and love for this family by engaging with it in a dialogue about its problems"[GS. 1&3].

107. Also in India the scope of the Church's mission has widened. The *concern for social problems,* development, liberation from unjust structures has become part of her mission. This opening to secular realities obviously implies problems and leads to tensions.

They must be faced. But we are not allowed to drift back into a dichotomy of secular and sacred: the spiritual mission of the Church must not be isolated — kept out of actual contact and involvement with life — and society: viceversa, however, secular involvement must not be reduced to social or political programmes. The Church's mission is concerned with "the whole of man and the society". To realise this oneness of spiritual and secular in the personal life, and to make it an inspiration for our society is the primary task of the Church.

108. The comprehensiveness of the Church's mission leads to actual *inculturation of the Christian message.* Too often inculturation is understood as the assumption of some elements of the lifestyle of the people; often it is too much limited to liturgy. The mission Decree sees it in the animating presence of the Church in the stream of life, of concrete communities with their needs and struggles, and with the life stream of the nation. "Let (Christians) share in cultural and social life...Let them be familiar with their national and religious traditions" [AG 11]. "The Church is one with men of every condition, but especially with the poor and the afflicted....She shares with their joys and sorrows, knows their longings and problems, suffers with them in the throes of death. To those in quest of peace she wishes to answer in fraternal dialogue bringing them the peace and light of the Gospel" [AG 12].

109. A new culture is suddenly erupting in India because of the impact of mass communication which is unifying the world into a "global village". The younger generation in particular is growing up in an atmosphere deeply influenced by mass media, more so in our metropolis. Missionaries should be eager to equip themselves to use the media for the proclamation of the Gospel. The evangelization of the modern culture demands that the Church integrate the Christian message into the "new culture" created by the modern communication with its new language, new technology and new psychology.

*Towards a Theology of Mission*

110. A Mission theology of today will have to take into account the different, seemingly contradictory trends of modern theologies and pastoral practices and assess their creative contribution to a coherent understanding of the Church's mission. It has to face,

first, the *polarity between two basic truths*: God's all comprising saving love, "his saving design extends to all men" (NA 1), and the need to proclaim "Christ the Way, the Truth and the life in whom men find the fullness of religious life and in whom God has recommended all things to himself" (NA 2).

111. The Council Declaration on the Church's attitude towards other religions was a break through. It was the first time in the history of the Church that an official document deals with this attitude, not in terms of apologetics not in terms of evangelization, but in the conscience of co-existence and the need of constructive co-operation in serving the human family in its searches and agonies. The document was highly controversial, but its main contents had actually been anticipated already in *other Council texts:* Dei Verbum had spoken about God's revelation to all people from the beginning (DV 2), and the Constitution on the Church had placed the entire mystery of Christ and the Church in the trinitarian context of the divine plan from the beginning "to dignify men with a participation in his own divine life" (LG 2), consequently salvation is offered to all (LG 16).

112. Thus the vision of a world which in its totality, from the beginning, is embraced in God's saving love is part and parcel of new mission theology. *Never must Jesus Christ or his Church be seen in isolation*, apart from the mainstream of humanity, a late phenomenon in the history of mankind. In the Council the vision of the early Christian communities was revived: they were challenged by worshipers of ancient gods that their religion was only of yesterday. Their answer was the vision of the "Church from Abel" (ecclesia ab Abel); in Jesus and his Church this community of believers, who stood for God's word, became a visible social body. Thus Jesus is not the beginning of a radically new history, rather what God offered all people from the beginning, the meaning and ultimate destiny of human existence in God, became visible and historically tangible in Jesus Christ. Thus from the beginning God revealed himself to all people to make them share in his life and so offered them salvation within the frame of their understanding, in the context of their religions and cultures.

113. Man's answer to this revelation is *the free surrender to the "beyond"*, the Absolute (however it may be called). This surrender is an existential art which gives orientation to the whole of human life. It is given to God within the framework of human understanding of the world. Each one can find the ultimate fulfillment

in God in his commitment according to, and within the limitations of this understanding, following his conscience. "Those also can attain to ever lasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ and his Church yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of their conscience" [LG. 16].

114. The second vital sphere that splits the efforts of mission activity is the separation of the spiritual and secular dimension of the Church's mission. The spiritual and social mission of the Church are not two separate tasks but two aspects of one and same mission entrusted to the Church. Already Pope Paul VI warned against the danger of reducing the liberation effort, to which the Church is committed, "to the dimensions of a simply temporal project. They would reduce her aims to a man-centred goal. The salvation of which she is the messenger would be reduced to material well being" [EN 32].

Mission theology will not only include both dimensions, spiritual and social, into its scope but will have to show their radical unity. The One Jesus Christ is Saviour sent by God and truly our brother in our earthly life and struggle. The Reign of God proclaimed by him is not outside our world; it is this very world of ours filled and transformed by God's power. This renewal is realized in its beginnings already in our present world and society.

115. Needed is also a renewed *ecclesiology:* The Council has turned away from the image of a triumphant Church. Modern feelings often go much further: there is a general resistance against institutional structures and establishments; they should give way to a Church of prophetic dynamism. Such trends would lead to an individualism which is totally alien to Jesus' message and to the biblical understanding of God's people. Jesus wanted community; community from the beginning was structured and must ever remain so.

116. Still, a missionary ecclesiology must take into account the real conflicts existing within the Church: Rome Vs India, hierarchy Vs community, clergy Vs laity, man Vs woman, dalits Vs castes etc. These conflicts are real and cannot be brushed aside. We have to learn the true meaning of communion (koinonia) in conflict situations. The Council has given not only ecclesiological principles but also decisive orientations for office and power in the Church: it is to the service of the people [LG 18]. It outlines the

relation of bishops and priests and viceversa [PO 7] and of priests towards the laity [PO 9]. In a balanced manner it describes the central position of the bishop in a missionary situation: "It is the role of the bishop as ruler and centre of unity of the diocesan apostolate to promote missionary activity, to direct and coordinate it but always in such a way that the spontaneous zeal of those who share in the work will be preserved and fostered" [AG 30].

117. Needed is most of all a comprehensive Christology. The traditional presentation was a theology from above: Jesus Christ is the Word Incarnate who through his cross and resurrection redeemed the world. His message was mostly left to moral and spiritual theology. Modern trends begin from below, the historical reality of Jesus' life and ministry with his revolutionary vision of God's reign, a society of equality, love and service. His divine origin, the resurrection and his lasting presence in the Church became marginal. This [admittedly over simplified] polarization of two approaches must not only be overcome. Both very legitimate starting points must become focal point of a comprehensive missionary Christology. Jesus Christ must be presented as God's revelation and presence in our world through his life and message, in his work and struggle, in death and resurrection. This full mystery of Jesus is embodied in the Church — his "body" — and must be realized in our world.

118. Thus any separation of Jesus' person from his message of God's reign would vitiate the understanding of both: Jesus is not only prophet with the vision of a better world but the embodiment of this new world: in the resurrection he is revealed as the first born of the new creation. Divorced from the person of Jesus the message of God's reign would be human efforts of improving the world. The Encyclical Redemptoris Mission has emphasized this oneness of Jesus' person and his message may be exemplified more concretely: Jesus declared the great commandment of love of God and neighbour the core of his message [MK 12, 28-31]; it has been recognized as such through the ages. Obviously it has to be translated into thousand norms of secular character, political, social and economic. The French revolution at the beginning of the modern era could find no better programme for a new humanity but the great "values" of the Gospel: Freedom, equality, brotherhood. But it was no longer the Gospel but an ideology which ended in bloodshed. We cannot build the new world

alone. We must humbly listen to Jesus: "Without me you can do nothing" [Jn 15.5]. Unless the "values of the Kingdom", are rooted in God and accepted as his gift they result in confusion and destruction.

119. On the other hand the gospels (particularly Luke) make us understand that the helplessness and degradation of our human world are not a hindrance to God's lifegiving power: the weak, the sinful and rejected sections of the people become the privileged invitees to the Kingdom. The certitude that God's reign is coming, that therefore the result of our enterprises does not depend on our inadequacy, nor will be destroyed by hostile influences gives serenity to Christian life and work. It prevents the sense of frustration and failure that threatens all who work for a better society. Jesus has experienced the temptation personally and expressed it in the parables of the wasted seeds - and still there is a fruitful harvest; or the weeds that seem to suffocate the wheat in the field - still, the wheat will ripen.

120. The Paschal mystery, Jesus' death and resurrection, will forever remain the core of the comprehensive missionary Christology. It may not yet have found its appropriate place in our Indian world. At times we are told that Jesus' resurrection means little in the Indian context: we are concerned not much with a risen body but with our earthly life; besides, Saints in India often are presented as ending their life by entering heaven.

It would be a mistake to place the paschal mystery into such a context. It consists first in *Jesus' cruel death,* in total rejection and failure. Jesus' death has been considered a "folly to the gentiles" (1 Cor.1,23). It is not a peaceful samadhi but the *surrender to the inscrutable mystery of God.* In his death Jesus identifies himself with the hopelessness and despair of our world, with pain, injustice, cruelty which have no meaning, the hollowness of empty ideologies breaks up before Jesus' cross, it cannot be redeemed with shallow slogans. But this Jesus, whose life we have totally destroyed, was raised. The *encounter with the Risen Lord* is the overwhelming experience of seeing a human life, that seemed totally crushed, emerging from God's power and love. This is God's answer to our human hopelessness: not a divine intervention that would come to our aid and fight a victorious battle for us — these are mythological dreams — but this life of ours, weak and vulnerable, defeated and destroyed is fulfilled in the mystery of God.

121. This is *the core of human existence.* The historical features of Jesus' life and struggle, are Palestinian, they belong to a small world in the Middle East, but the mystery of his death which is fulfilled in God himself transcends cultural boundaries. This is the substance of our faith; it has significance not only for Christians but "for all men of good will". All are in a way, which cannot be traced by us, "associated with the paschal mystery" (GS 22). This is Jesus' significance for all people; it can be explained; artists have sensed it deeply and expressed it in art. It is our mission to communicate it. But faith in Jesus is only God's gift.

122. From the beginnings of the Church the celebration of the Paschal Mystery in the *Eucharist* has been the centre of Christian worship. It is the "memorial" of Jesus' Death and Resurrection — not the nostalgic rememberance of a past event but the actual realization and participation in Jesus' Death and Resurrection. In this celebration the believers join their own self gift to God with Jesus' obedience unto death; with him they are included in God's life giving love and committed to his mission in the world. The Church's mission without the Eucharist would lose its heart; it would be like the replacement of human work with the performance of a robot: it may be even more efficient but it lacks life. The renewed Christian faith, which transforms human life, celebrated in the community of believers, is the lifespring of the renewed mission of the Church. It is also its goal: to unite the community of believers in the banquest of God's love. It is also the sacrament of the eschathological fullness of life, love and light in the Kingdom of God.

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